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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT Diary of a Soviet Officer

PLACE  
ACQUIRED

DATE  
ACQUIRED

DATE OF

DATE DISTR. 4 Dec 50

NO. OF PAGES 1

NO. OF ENCLS. 3  
(LISTED BELOW)

SUPPLEMENT TO  
REPORT NO.

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a Soviet officers

diary, covering the period June 1941 to May 1945.

the diary deals mostly with combat sit-  
uations. It contains considerable information on local tactical and logistic  
problems, but is chiefly notable for its data on the morale of Soviet troops in  
action, their political indoctrination and control and their reaction to it, dis-  
ciplinary measures, relations between various levels of command, the reactions of  
local populations in western USSR to the Soviet troops, and the behavior of Soviet  
troops in Poland and Germany. Main subdivisions of the diary are as follows:

- I. Retreat - June-December 1941
- II. At the Officers' Training School - January-May 1942
- III. On the Defensive - July-December 1942
- IV. On the Offensive - January-April 1943
- V. The Battle of Kursk - May-August 1943
- VI. The Dnepr Bridgehead - To October 1943
- VII. The Battles for Kiev - To March 1944
- VIII. The Battles for Tarnopol - To May 1944
- IX. In the Reserve - To November 1944
- X. The Sandomir Bridgehead - To January 1945
- XI. Assault on Germany - February 1945
- XII. In Germany - To May 1945

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The Front-Line Diary of a Soviet Officer  
1941 - 1945

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## CHAPTER I

Introduction: The Situation on the Western Borders.

The strengthening of the western borders of the USSR was already begun in the autumn of 1939, i.e., in the first days after the addition to the USSR of the<sup>w</sup>estern oblasts of the Ukraine and Belorussia; and after the unsuccessful visit of Molotov to Hitler in November 1940, work on the borders ~~was~~ developed at full speed. Lines of trains carrying cement, metal and other construction materials moved toward the west from all corners of the country. Hundreds of thousands of convicts and prisoners from the innumerable prisons and concentration camps of the Urals, Siberia and the Far East--on trains, in automobiles and on foot--were sent to the west for the building of the defense lines. Everywhere, from the shores of the Black Sea to the swamps of Kare<sup>li</sup>a, were ~~mm~~ established ~~monstrous~~ fortified regions, and were built pill-boxes, trenches and every sort of anti-tank obstacles. . . .

The government knew that war with Germany was inevitable, and it prepared for it. It made preparations on the borders and in the rear. Heavy industry and the national economy was converted to war purposes. Quietly recruits were being mobilized and divisions were being formed, trained according to schedule, and sent to the west. The railroads were changed over to war time schedules. Military units were issued additional equipment, were brought up to strength and stood in readiness.

The Bolshevik government, drunk with its internal "successes," decided to meet the external enemy with the same ideological weapons with which it had so successfully destroyed the "enemy" as had never been seen before within. Such an army/of propagandists and agitators doubled their efforts to indoctrinate ~~and~~ officers and men

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~~from the army requirements for the world revolution.~~ The Red Army was represented as invincible, and the propagandists called on it to liberate the proletariat of the bourgeois countries from the oppression of capitalism. "There is no fortress that we Bolsheviks cannot take"! ~~minima minima~~ the propagandists dinned into the ears of the soldiers. For this reason many of the officers and men imagined the ~~future~~ future war as no more serious than military maneuvers, in which everything would be accomplished just as the command, and especially the political section, wished; the "Reds" would certainly defeat the "Blues" and would carry out on schedule the requirements of the party and the government. Often at the beginning of the war many Red Army men spent their time in meetings and conferences instead of meeting the enemy in fortified positions.

Such an attitude toward the war promised no good. This war, judging by the preparations for it, would exceed all previous ones in ferocity and would leave a permanent traces in the mind of mankind. -- And I decided to keep a diary in order to preserve my impressions and thoughts in the days of the war.

#### RETREAT

(June - December 1941)

1 June. Brody.

. . . . There are rumors that the Germans are concentrating troops on our border. We are preparing to return the blow of the enemy with double ~~strength~~ force.

15 June

We have been moved from Brody closer to the San River. The rumors are more alarming. Meetings and ~~minima~~ assemblies have become more frequent.

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Saturday, 21 June. En route from regimental HQ to the battery.

The local peasants do not like us and are <sup>hostile</sup> antipathetic to our arrangements. We came here to "liberate" our blood-brothers from the oppression of the Polish <sup>gentry</sup> ~~lords~~ [pany] and landowners, but the "liberated ones" are not joyful over their "liberation"; we have to go armed among the<sup>m</sup>, under the protection of a guard; in other words, we have to ~~be~~ fear them. Worst of all, we have to convince them ~~what~~ we do not intend to carry out collectivization and elimination of the kulaks among them.

Heretofore they had us tell the peasants about the ~~delights~~ delights of life on the collective farms, but today the regimental commander said at a meeting of the ~~commanders~~ battery commanders: "Be careful not to talk to them about collectivization; don't invite trouble. They are so angry at us that they might start a regular uprising against us."

Sunday, 22 June. At division HQ. 10 a.m.

~~Chaos~~<sup>o</sup>: From the direction of the border comes the roar of artillery; in the sky fly planes bearing the swastika. In the course of the morning the commander of the regiment received three contradictory orders: first, to move the regiment to the border, then to withdraw to some place in the rear, and now to stay where he is.

24 June. written on the march.

The war has really begun. ~~The roar of guns fills the air. German fighter planes hang over our heads and give us no chance to form a marching column. There are few of our planes. We have already suffered casualties; many trucks have been burned up by the German planes; and there are innumerable dead horses. The men are fleeing in disorder.~~ The roar of guns fills the air. German fighter planes hang over our heads and give us no chance to form a marching column. There are few of our planes. We have already suffered casualties; many trucks have been burned up by ~~the German~~ the planes; and there are ~~dead~~ innumerable dead horses. The men are fleeing in disorder.

~~Evening~~

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Evening.

Regimental ~~Hq~~ has disappeared somewhere. We cannot assemble the battery<sup>ies</sup> on account of the German aviation. The roads are filled with fleeing soldiers. We haven't seen the Germans yet, and yet we're fleeing from them.

25 June. On the march.

We are ordered to destroy the German tanks, as they are creating panic. We have fired on them at long range, but don't know if we have scored any hits or not. We haven't met them at close range yet. The planes are the most annoying. We curse not only them, but also our own fly~~ers~~: where are they?

28 June. On the L'vov highway.

Our regiment and our whole division has been routed. We are fleeing eastward in complete disorder, without being able to orientate ourselves. We expect the Germans in front, and they appear unexpectedly in the rear and take us by surprise. We have to avoid the main roads and take to the by-roads where it is safer and easier to get ~~supplies~~ provisions.

Yesterday we came upon a prison camp (lager' zaklyuchen-nykh) in the woods. ~~They say~~ <sup>We hear</sup> that they were hurrying to evacuate this camp by railroad, but were unable to; German reconnaissance troops caught up with them. On seeing the approaching foreigners, some of the prisoners disarmed their guards and fought against the Germans. The enemy fled, leaving two trucks in the mud.

The camp guard had already disappeared. The prisoners were looting the stores and fleeing.

1 July

I am retreating with a disorganized mass of military personnel. There are no ~~1000~~ <sup>US OFFICIALS ONLY</sup> and subordinates.

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You might say we now have liberty and equality. Only two things worry us: getting food, and the fear of losing direction. We can't travel in large groups because of the German planes.

3 July (I believe)

There has joined us a senior battalion commissar, the chief of the political section of some division, a Ukrainian by nationality. He advises turning away from the soviets, whose power is rapidly declining, and awaiting the arrival of the Germans, who, in the opinion of the commissar, would never fall so low in the ~~eyes~~ eyes of the people as the Bolshevik rulers.

4 July.

Yesterday I saw Germans close at hand. A soviet truck with a powerful loudspeaker went close up to them. The loudspeaker began to broadcast propaganda in German. The Germans listened a long time, and then fired on the truck and set it on fire. I don't know what happened to the agitator. He was sent by the commissar of a division newly arrived here, in the hope of affecting the Germans with propaganda about the class unity of the German and ~~Russian~~ Soviet workers. But the Germans didn't believe him.

10 July

There are rumors that we are in a large area which has been surrounded. Nobody knows the situation; there is panic everywhere. Everything of value not evacuated to the east is being burned to keep it out of the hands of the enemy. Tank crews are abandoning their tanks for lack of fuel. And endless chaotic mass is moving ~~in an avalanche~~ ~~in an avalanche~~ toward the east: people, cattle, military equipment and household goods. The composition of this mass changes continuously; some drop out, and new masses of ~~new~~ fugitives ~~take their~~ places. The nearness of the

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front and the foreign troops frighten the inhabitants, and they leave their homes. But in the course of a day of exhausting travel they begin to regret that they left and say: "It couldn't be worse than it was". And they stay behind to wait for the Germans.

15 August

There are rumors about the shooting of the Jews by the Germans. Can this true?

25 August

to an infantry division

I have been assigned/as commander of an anti-tank battery. We fired on the tanks. We can fire no more for lack of shells.

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20 October

I am at Moscow. We are holding our positions despite the onslaught of the enemy. It seems to me that the front is held not by the Red Army but by the civilian population, for there are few troops here, but millions of the population.

On the 17th the enemy . . . succeeded in advancing close to the city in many places; they say that in the city itself there was panic and the destruction of shops.

Refugees passing through the front lines say that the Germans are killing all the Jews, without any reason, and that they are shooting the Russians for the slightest resistance.

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1 November

Our division ~~has been~~ is retining far to the rear to ~~my~~ reform.

4 December

They are sending me to the Urals, to an officers' refresher course [kursy perepodgotovki]

## CHAPTER II

AT THE OFFICERS' TRAINING SCHOOL [NA KURSAKH]

(January - May 1942

13 Jan 1942. Shadrinsk in the Urals.

I am busy 12 hours a day according to the schedule, besides which I have to spend two hours on independent work on special assignments for home-work. We live in a barracks, with 700 men in ~~in~~ one hall. We sleep on board bunks, arranged in two tiers. I was lucky: I got a place in the upper row; there it is warm and one doesn't get <sup>dirt</sup> ~~much~~ in his eyes. It is cold on the lower bunks, and all kinds of stuff falls through the cracks between the planks. To each trainee is allotted a space 50 centimeters wide and 2 meters long. Since each straw mattress takes up more than 50 centimeters, they have issued us two mattresses to each three men, so that one of us has to lie over the plane where the mattresses meet.

Each day we spend four hours outdoors in tactical training and drill; two hours are spent on regulations, and six hours on the history of the party and other political training.

21 January. At the same place.

New units keep arriving here for reforming. The city is a military camp. Drilling troops are scattered throughout the surrounding fields and woods. I have no time to write my impressions.

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27 April. Zlatoust.

I am living in a private apartment here belonging to old Marfa Petrovaa;  
I am with the regiment the entire day. Our unit is being newly formed and  
we have received troops and a commander; we have only four guns, though, in  
place of the allotted thirty-two and not a single motor vehicle.

Today a plank shed was erected, which will be our mess. Up to now we  
have been fed in the open, in both rain and cold weather.

20 June.

I don't have a single minute of free time. I haven't glanced at you  
for almost two months now, my dear little note-book. Any day now we shall  
set off for the front. Our guns and vehicles still haven't arrived. Our  
chief worry these days is to intimidate and persuade the troops to ~~proceed to~~  
the front without desertion and self-mutilation. Rumours are current here  
that units are arriving at the front having lost half of their personnel  
during movement.

26 June.

For the last ~~few~~ <sup>gotten</sup> days our men have been <sup>to be</sup> ~~called up~~ at night for ~~shipment~~  
*loaded on trains* in echelons. In this way the brigade staff is <sup>testing</sup> ~~checking~~ our preparedness for  
movement. Each training exercise is brought to an end by the desertion of  
~~two or three men~~ <sup>two or three men</sup> ~~two-thirds of the troops~~ . . . as if we were really to be loaded for movement  
to the front.

27 June.

We are on the move. I am writing in the staff <sup>(freight)</sup> ~~baggage~~ car while we  
are held up by the semaphore. The halt is very opportune--there are no  
lavatories in the cars.

29 June. Moscow.

*train* ~~echelon~~ has arrived at Moscow. Night time. Like a mother, grieving  
for her fallen sons, stands Moscow, enshrouded by a mourning veil. And in  
Sverdlovsk or Zlatoust people, at this very minute, haven't the faintest  
conception of the war.

In the evenings barrage balloons are put up here and there around Moscow.

30 June. Aprelevka.

~~The Moscow Command~~ did not want to take us and directed us to  
Aprelevka.

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5 February. Same place.

The training is intensive. The life is monotonous. However, the other day Lieut K of our company was court-martialed for theft of a comrade's underwear. The food is vile and we are allotted fifty grams of tobacco a week. It is strictly forbidden to buy anything extra.

~~ALARM!~~ I throw down my note-pad and run to ~~the shelter.~~ *muster with my formation.*

10 February. Same place.

I am writing these lines ~~with~~ <sup>in</sup> a sort of shorthand, abbreviating words.

A German leaflet was discovered in the field bag of the commander of our outfit. He picked it up at the front and foolishly failed to throw it away. He was accused of treason and was excluded from the party. It seems there was a poet among the students who was keeping a diary. He didn't write anything wrong but in his verses expressed a longing for his ~~girl~~ <sup>sweetheart</sup>, and his stay in the training school was a burden for him. Finding these notes, the commandant of the school reduced the author to the ranks for "pettiness and loss of a sense of duty."

Someone is rummaging through our things when we are asleep at night, and ~~even~~ in the daytime *when we are away.*

21 April. At the Shadrinsk Railway Station.

We have completed our training courses.

~~My friends and I~~ <sup>attacked the</sup> ~~threw ourselves on~~ bread and other food given us on the train like ravenous wolves. <sup>can hardly</sup> I <sup>ate</sup> ~~don't~~ believe that <sup>sitting</sup> ~~had eaten~~ a two-kilogram bread loaf and a kilogram of sausage at ~~any one time~~ <sup>for a long</sup>

Received orders to proceed to Sverdlovsk for assignment.

23 April. Sverdlovsk.

I am sitting in the staff mess of the commandant of the Ural military district ~~(rooming house)~~. We receive our rations here by chits given to us at the time of registration <sup>Personnel</sup> by the ~~cadre~~ Section. The food is repugnant here, even worse than that at the training school.

25 April. Zlatoust in the Southern Urals.

I arrived here for ~~my active~~ <sup>further</sup> duty. An <sup>anti-tank</sup> ~~artillery~~ tank ~~company~~ <sup>of the</sup> regiment RGG (Reserve of the High Command) is being formed here and I am to serve in it.

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learned ~~US OFFICIALS ONLY~~  
 Having ~~heard~~ of ~~the~~ ~~desertion~~ ~~from~~ the front, Moscow sent political workers to conduct meetings against desertion, but met with a ~~refusal~~ ~~our~~ ~~quartermasters~~ who were sent for provisions.

We received guns and vehicles and will today set off again on the train.

3 July. En Route.

We passed through the junction at Kochetovka. A bitter feeling ~~weighs~~ *is left in* ~~our hearts,~~ *of trains* ~~down the spirit.~~ A large concentration at the station was pounded into splinters and burnt to cinders by a sudden raid of German aircraft.

*train* Our ~~echelon,~~ *is* fortunately, *is at present headed* ~~for the line being bound for the south and~~ *stops more and more often* ~~is ever more frequently being held up at the stations,~~ *Overhead* The ~~roar~~ roar of hostile aircraft can already be heard in the quiet night.

6 July.

We have finally *safely* arrived at the front. ~~The arrival went off in good~~ ~~order.~~ Trains arriving before and after us were pounded by German aircraft.

They didn't touch us. We are dispersing into the woods.

Night. Rockets are being discharged from behind the woods, *momentarily* ~~in a twinkling~~ *leaving* ~~making fiery swaths in the darkness--~~ the "Atushas" are playing. The cutting,

drawn out sounds of the rockets reach our ears. In half a minute a *"pop, pop, pop"* ~~pop~~ *pop* begins, very close, as if gigantic peas were being poured from the sky.

Training in the rear has ended, and life in front-line combat has begun.

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## CHAPTER III

ON THE DEFENSIVE  
(July - December 1942)

7 &amp; July. Davidovka

During the night we were transloaded from the train to trucks and arrived in the combat area. We have been ordered to help the infantry dislodge the enemy from the left bank of the Don.

We just weren't organized as a unit: instead of the 78 trucks provided for in our T/O, we had received only 13 broken-down wrecks.

13 July. A grove.

Here is located the command post of our regiment. . . . The Germans are attacking. Their sub-machine gunners, hiding in the rye, penetrate our ranks and create disorder and panic.

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27 July. A grove near Petropavlovka.

Three days ago the infantry ~~man~~ forced their way across the Don and drove the Germans out of several houses in Korotoyak. But they were poorly armed for combat against the enemy tanks, and fled even at the sound of their motors. To "reassure" the infantry, the brigade commander gave me the following orders by telephone (in his exact words):

*'queen of battles'*  
"The ~~Ussarina~~ ~~apparently a code name~~, that damned infantry, have dreamt that they were being attacked by tanks and are already beginning to run away from Korotoyak. The idiots have failed to take the town and already want to return it to Hitler. I order you to send the 7th Battery to put some backbone into the ~~Ussarina~~ *'queen'*. If any son of a bitch runs away, shoot him without warning. " Knowing that <sup>there</sup> was no bridge, no other crossing facilities, and no engineers, he ended his order with:

"Swim across, dragging the guns after you, if you have to, or pull them over the heads of the dead. There are

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thousands of them there floating on the Don."

28 July. Same place.

/ The author describes periods of quiet on the river - describes the many bodies of Russian soldiers floating on it/

29 July. Evening. Same place.

/ ~~Describes~~ A narrow plank bridge/on piles across the river where the Petropavlovka-Korotoyak bridge, now destroyed, was. Movement on it is not properly regulated. It is a poor structure, a bottleneck; the Germans know it, and don't waste their ammunition. Mortar shells add casualties from this bridge ~~add~~ to the bodies floating in the water\_/

3 August. A grove west of a farmstead across the Don

We have finally moved the 7th Battery across on boats.

The carpenters working on the bridge have resorted to trickery. They have put the walk a few inches under water, so that it is not visible, and have forbidden all traffic on it in the daytime. The enemy has fallen for the trick and has stopped firing on the "bridge". He apparently thinks we are not using it any more.

~~4 August. The same place~~

5 August. The same place.

In Korotoyak the ~~"Tsarina"~~ <sup>infantry</sup> attacked the city prison and occupied, with heavy losses, the basement and lower floor. But Fritz is throwing grenades at them from the upper floors. Tomorrow a disciplinary (shtrafnaya) company will repeat the attack, supported by two guns of the 7th Battery.

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10 August.

There has been almost no fighting for a week. Nevertheless the soldiers have not had a free moment. We have been up to our necks in work connected with Order No. 227 of the People's Commissariat of Defense.

A funny thing happened in connection with this order. The political section of the brigade, guided by ~~the~~ ~~instructions~~ from the political section of the Sixth Army, sent us several printed copies of the order. The commissar of the regiment distributed them to the batteries for reading. As usual, ~~announcements~~ there was stirred up mass agitation and holding of ~~meetings~~ ~~at~~ meetings about the order.

Its contents were as follows: the Commissariat of Defense announced that in reaching the Volga, Leningrad, and the Caucasus, the enemy had so weakened us that now we were superior to him in nothing -- neither in number of reserves, tanks nor, least of all, planes. The Commissariat ~~has~~ declared the Fatherland to be in ~~danger~~ danger. "Not one step backward!" it ordered. Retreat would be punished by death. If a soldier ~~was~~ retreated, his neighbor or his commander was obliged to shoot him. If a platoon or company retreated, then any officer or ~~man~~ brave Red Army man was obliged to shoot its commanding officer and take command himself. According to Order No. 227, the commanders of battalions, regiments and divisions, if their troops retreated, were to be shot without trial or formal inquiry. Senior officers showing soft-heartedness towards those who fail to carry out this order were themselves liable to strict punishment or to be shot.

Three days after the dissemination of this order

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there suddenly came instructions to gather up all copies and return them to the Political Section. It seems that the order was a secret document, ~~and~~ not to be disclosed even to the commanders of regiments. The huge propaganda organization began to work to correct the blunder of the Political Section. For a whole week men from the Political Section and staff officers ~~filled~~ poured out on the batteries explanations of the secret nature of the document; they called meetings and said to the men:

"To you, Stalin's tank destroyers, has been entrusted the highest state secret, a trust deserved by no other ~~branch~~ arm of the service. You should understand this and exercise special caution to see that the crafty enemy does not learn of it."

There was so much of this talk, so many meetings and party, Komsomol and Red Army assemblies that it seemed as if any soldier would rather have died than to have divulged the great secret, known only to him.

Then suddenly one bright morning a German plane scattered over us, like falling snow, leaflets containing the full text of our well-guarded secret. The Germans added no comment ~~any~~ to the order except to put at the end, after Stalin's signature: "For once, at least, the ~~Russian~~ Bolshevik propaganda tells the truth."

I, too, refrain from comment.

13 August. In the regimental HQ grove.

For the first time in my life I witnessed an execution. The man to be shot ~~was~~ had to be taken by force to the place of execution; he was dragged by his bound hands and kicked. However, he faced the muzzles of the rifles with surprising calmness; I was more stirred up than he.

The man being shot was Shchipanov, of the Third Battery.

And this is why: hour by hour the strength of the

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brigade was being dissipated in combat. The enemy with German methodicalness launched attack after attack. Several times the PTR (anti-tank rifle) battalion took possession of the oil factory and the city prison of Korotoyak, but ~~of each time~~ each time what was taken ~~from~~ after long days of bloody fighting was given up to the enemy in the course of a few hours. Order after order was sent down from above, with the rebukes of the brigade commander. Especially infuriated was the Political Section of the Army (and Mekhlis himself); they ascribed the failure not to the weakness of our forces, but to the lack of political indoctrination. Someone had ~~noted~~ noted that 17 men of the brigade were out of action because of ~~wound~~ injuries not incurred in combat. Most of these - nine men - were from our regiment: a truck driver had his foot run over; a gunner was out of his unit because of dropsy of the legs; a battery signalman shot his hand while cleaning his revolver and went to the hospital; and there were other cases. ~~from~~ The rebukes and accusations from the ~~the~~ brigade commander seemed to accept no mitigating circumstances for these unfortunate incidents. In poor Shchipanov's case, a detonating cap of an anti-tank mine had exploded in his hand.

There was no judicial inquiry. Shchipanov's fate was decided by the chief of the Special Section [TN: the counter-intelligence unit of the NKVD] and the commissar of the regiment. However much the commander of the regiment tried to persuade the Special Section man to investigate first and then to decide, it was decided to pass sentence first and then to compile the evidence. Here is what the commanders said in my presence:

They were deciding whether Shchipanov had deliberately or accidentally injured his hand. The commander of the regiment described him as a brave soldier, but suffering from laziness and

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"The soldiers ought to be questioned," ~~proposed~~ suggested the commander of the regiment, "to find out if anyone saw how it happened."

"He should be shot like a dog, as a lesson to the others," said the commissar in a calm, monotonous voice; "otherwise, one will be dropping out of the ranks because of dropsy, another for ~~dysentery~~ diarrhea. If one is shot before the ranks, a hundred others will ~~take heed~~ learn a lesson from it."

They talked of the other cases in connection with this: of the truck-driver, Sus'ko, who had deliberately put his foot under the wheel of a truck and now lay in ~~an ambulance~~ the rear area, awaiting removal to a hospital.

"Then Sus'ko should be judged, and not Shchipanov, who is not at all to blame," urged the commander of the regiment against the arguments of the commissar.

"No; Sus'ko's case is not suitable for this purpose. He is a truck driver in the rear, and nobody runs away from the rear. There would be no such effect among the soldiers from the shooting of Sus'kov as from the shooting of ~~him~~ Shchipanov." Thus the Special Section man concluded his consideration and turned to the regimental commander with the words: "Announce to the battery that <sup>tomorrow</sup> a man is to be shot, and assemble as many men as possible; you, Commissar, select a place for the execution."

For carrying out the sentence, volunteers were chosen from the active Party and Komsomol members [aktiv]

For two days they agitated in the batteries about the "traitorous" action of Shchipanov. On the morning of the third day ten men from each battery and many men from other units were summoned to the ~~mm~~ edge of the grove in which was located the regimental HQ. For the sake of formality there had been written up minutes of the session of the "Troika" [summary court] ~~US OFFICIALS ONLY~~ Special Section of the

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brigade. Regimental Commissar ~~Б~~ Vorob'yev was in charge of the execution.

I, with my pencil, had intended to describe how they led out the "guilty" man and stood him up before the ranks of soldiers, how cold-bloodedly the commissar gave his command, and how ~~humbly, meekly, and limply~~ limply, without having uttered a sound, Shchipanov began to fall only after the second volley, and how ~~the~~ coldbloodedly the men and officers fired into his already lifeless body with their sub-machine guns. All this I meant to describe, but I haven't the strength even to think of it.

14 and 15 August, Same place.  
unsuccessful

[Further/attempts to extend the beachhead, to take the prison and the vegetable oil factory. Attacks crushed by German artillery, chiefly mortars]

A few days ago another penal company arrived here. According to their commander they have been in three attacks; only 70 out of 200 men remain alive.

20 August. Same place.

What shall I do ~~you~~ with you, notebook? Why do I write these notes? Sometimes I ~~sometimes~~ scold myself for the ~~shallowness, meanness, and triviality~~ triviality of my ~~meager~~ writing; sometimes I justify myself.

I do not doubt that with the vicissitudes of life at the front, these notes may fall into another's hands. Whoever may be my reader, Russian or German, man or woman, if you still bear the name of Man, ~~my spirit will not~~ the stream of my spirit will not seem to you the bearer of poison. If you are no longer a human being, but a politician, I tell you this;

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If you are a Russian, remember that I love my country no less than you; that I am defending it and will defend it honorably and unselfishly as well as you; and in vain will be your attempts to impute to me indifference to my Fatherland.

If you are a German, today my enemy, know that I am a soldier of my country, as you<sup>x</sup> are of yours, that I will remain true to my oath so long as you act as master in my home. <sup>When you</sup> Leave my home ~~and~~ in peace, ~~and~~ I will cease to bear arms, and I assure you that I will not consent to taking part in robbery of your home.

Such is my commandment.

A few words more to any Russian who may read them:

For a long time I have observed our life, trying not to believe the facts. You, too, look at our life: <sup>it</sup> is/not ~~that~~ ~~an~~ insidious power which lords it over us, ~~which~~ clothing itself in the name of truth and justice? I have no complete understanding of it, nor words to define it exactly. However, I feel the presence of this insidious power, and I advise you to look around you with a critical gaze. It is hard to say how this war will end, but one can say in advance that if this power is not rendered harmless, even a favorable ending of the war will bring no ~~happim~~ joy. Do you agree with me?

With this I end my departure from my usual notes. It was necessary for the strengthening of my soul.

23 August. Same place. Evening.

. . . The infantry has not yet removed its dead from the area of the river crossing. Even around brigade and division headquarters, where fighting had been going on for a long time, hundreds of rotting corpses have accumulated. The

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CO of the regiment reported them to the brigade CO. The latter answered:

"Don't forget, Major, that we are destroyers of Fascist tanks, and not a burial office. Pick up your own dead, but let the <sup>own</sup> "queen of battles" take care of her/business."

Recently I had carried to Cherepanov two of his mortally wounded men. He didn't even thank me.

25 August. Same place

We are without food. The regimental supply officer (pompokhoz) made this report: "The village assigned to us for supplies has provided twice its quota and has no more food. The inhabitants themselves are starving.

". . . I went to the brigade CO and requested the issue from the brigade ~~provisions~~ depot of provisions for at least one day. He answered:

"If you come to me with such requests, I'll send you to the rear to procure provisions, and send <sup>up</sup> ~~you~~ rear men ~~up~~ <sup>you to</sup> to command the batteries.

According to the T/O fixed by the Commissariat, you have five officers.

Ask them for food."

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~  
~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~  
26 August.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~  
. . . Anti-tank riflemen have lived for three days on food found in the cellars of Korotoyak.

28 August.

of the brigade Political Section,

I am attending a lecture/for staff officers, on "The Soviet rear of the Red Army."

"There is no country where the government and the people concern themselves with such fatherly attention and such motherly love with the needs of its army as in our Soviet country." Thus ended the lecture.

Events from 31 August to 3 September.

I have been through three days in hell. [Preceded by ~~artillery~~ ~~artillery~~ intensive artillery fire, the Germans launched a ~~an~~ determined attack on the Russian positions in Korotoyak. Kolosov was sent across the river to ascertain the situation. He is in <sup>a battalion</sup> ~~in~~ the ~~chapel~~ ~~chapel~~ basement of a chapel, crowded with seriously wounded men. An observer

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as is  
is killed, <sup>^</sup> Each in turn of ~~them~~ several volunteers to take his place.  
~~was likewise killed before he can~~ As the death of each is reported, the  
battalion CO seems mainly concerned lest the binoculars <sup>for the observer</sup> have been damaged. 7

We held ~~on~~ out till the evening of the next day. The enemy forced us  
out from the right flank; he took the positions of two batteries and from  
a height began to pour automatic fire down on us. One after another the  
(shtrafniki)  
penal company men ran away. The guns of the 7th Battery were destroyed,  
their crews killed or wounded. The battalion CO was left without a single  
able-bodied man and swam himself through the cold water ~~among~~ and dragged  
across the river the broken telephone line. He phoned his commander,  
reported the senselessness of holding the position any longer, and asked  
permission to save the aid station and the wounded. His commander  
answered: "You're alive yet. Well, hold the position. If you leave -  
remember Order No. 227."

When it was necessary to call men up to the firing line in the chapel,  
the politruk ["political leader"] of the company stationed ~~there~~ did not  
announce the order to combat but went up to each of the men in ~~order~~ <sup>turn</sup> and  
kicked him or ~~slapped him~~ ~~in the face~~ struck him in the face. His actions,  
of course, didn't help matters. In my opinion, it was not heroism which  
ruled the actions of these men at this moment, but cowardice. . .

9 November. An oak grove on the banks of the Don.

. . . We celebrated the anniversary of the October revolution. . .  
On the 6th of November, as is customary on holidays, the brigade CO re-  
quired the staff officers to be with the batteries at night, to keep them  
in order and ready for action. . .

15 November. Same place.

Today there was great excitement in the brigade and unit headquarters.  
There has been another ChePe (extraordinary <sup>incident</sup> ~~process~~): two men of ~~the~~ an  
anti-tank battalion deserted to the Germans in the night. The battalion  
commander, Planov, was removed from his command, and the commander of the  
company involved was reduced to the ranks and sent to a penal battalion.

~~20 November. Same place.~~

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30 November. Same place.

Today 30 women arrived at our brigade, to serve as telephone operators, secretaries, cooks and <sup>for</sup> other duties, to replace men needed for combat. The brigade CO selected the prettiest ones for his own headquarters. Our regiment got eleven of them. They are already used to the military environment and ~~assignments~~ carry out their assignments more conscientiously than the men.

The brigade CO has already had a drunken fight with a young captain of the signal corps over one good-looking one.

31 December.

. . . We have moved to a new ~~place~~ location, in the town of Maslovka.

2 January, 1943. Maslovka.

[Preparation for a big attack. Guns moved through the deep snow to a position on a hill. Difficulties in disposing guns because of constricted area. "Of course, we could ~~have~~ have set them up on the other side of the river and fired from concealed positions, but we, the anti-tank forces, are ordered to meet the enemy face-to-face." ]

3 January, 1943. Maslovka

Another ChePe (extraordinary incident) and a scandal throughout the army. To blame for the uproar are battery CO Grisha Galkin and a sanitation instructor of his battery, Marusya.

His ~~proposal~~ proposal of marriage having been refused by her, Galkin wrote a note to regimental headquarters: "Do not blame anyone else for my death. G. Galkin."

And he disappeared. They searched in vain for him. The matter was reported to the brigade CO. He raised a riot.

"Che-Pe - losing an officer without being in combat!" he yelled. "I'll tear up the regiment if he is not found!"

"Find him for me, dead or alive. If he's dead, bring him back to life [sic: "sdelayte zhivym"]. - And let him not only ~~be~~ be alive, but devoted to the party and the government, a battery commander."

"Find him. If he's dead, bring him back to life!" the commissar of repeating the words the brigade, ordered the CO

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Search in the homes of ~~the~~ ~~age~~ was unsuccessful. The Co sent soldiers to comb the surrounding woods, and search places where the ice had melted near the crossing, in case he had thrown himself into the water.

Meanwhile commissions swarmed over the regiment. Representatives arrived to investigate in the name of the brigade CO; officers from the Political Section came to ascertain the political and morale situation of the battery commanded by the "traitor to the Fatherland". And here came the Party commission; it had to establish how the guilty man had conducted himself during the defense. They sought out the personal letters of Galkin; they questioned Marusya without end. She, poor thing, ~~was crying~~ ~~handredman~~ having cried her eyes out, had already confessed her love for Galkin and agreed to marry him if only he could be found/ alive. And the chief of the Special Section rushed there in person, bringing along his whole staff, and himself ran to the ~~front~~ ~~front~~ lines to find out if anybody had tried to cross over to the Germans at night. These vigilant agents concluded that if his body were not found, it meant that he had gone over to the side of the enemy, and that this desertion was timed for the moment of the attack -- in other words, ~~mh~~ he was a spy. And what could they say to the command if the agentura of the Special Section let a spy slip through under its very nose?

Everything else was put aside: the disposition of the ~~guns~~ batteries, the procurement of ammunition, the transport of food for the troops -- everybody, as if stupified, searched for the suicide. At the time it seemed as if the brigade, with all its weapons and equipment, had now no other task than to look for Galkin.

And suddenly Galkin appeared at headquarters. -- Where ~~wasn't~~ had he been? Sleeping! -- sleeping in the warm dugout of the C6 of the ~~first~~ 1st Battery, after having been frozen at the time of the crossing.

Better for him if he had not showed up.

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The chief of the Special Section cried, "Shoot him, so he won't write [any more] such notes!"

The brigade commissar ordered: "Let him be judged by the Party commission and expelled from the ~~party~~ Party, and do it right away!"

The brigade CO ordered him to be removed from duty and sent to a penal battalion.

Galkin was a member of the Communist Party, and therefore the Party had to deal with him before any other punishment.

For six hours the Party bureau of the regiment sat in judgement of his case. The never-talkative Galkin hardly answered their questions. What was worst of all, in the opinion of the Party judges, was that the accused would not admit himself guilty. Galkin was charged with serious offenses: compromising ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> defiling the name of a member of the Lenin-Stalin Bolshevik Party, and attempt at desertion. With us, attempt at suicide was counted equivalent to desertion.

"You have committed the greatest crime against the Party and ~~your~~ <sup>our</sup> our country. And worst of all, you will not admit your errors. You are not whole-heartedly devoted to the ideas of Bolshevism ; you do not value membership in the Party as you do your very life; there is no place for you in the ranks of the Party!" This was the stern pronouncement of the chief of the Political Section.

"I feel no guilt, and I love Marusya with all my heart," stammered the accused in a final word.

He was expelled from the Party.

[Kolosov contrasts ~~this case with that of a~~ the action of the Party commission in this case with that in the case of a supply lieutenant charged with rape, who in a similar hearing berated himself, wept crocodile tears, and declared that death was preferable to life outside the Party. He got off with a severe reprimand, remained in the Party, and though he ~~was~~ committed ~~was~~ several other offences, the ~~the~~ Party commission did not find it advisable to try him again.]

[Added in handwriting] Galkin has been removed from duty, and papers are being prepared to try him in a court ~~for~~ [martial] for his treacherous

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note. Fortunately for him, the operation will soon begin, and they may forget about him in the excitement.

#### CHAPTER IV ON THE OFFENSIVE

14 January.

Today at dawn our great offensive opened with artillery fire. As soon as the artillery was silent, the infantry was to attack. Company, battalion and even regimental officers (komandiry) ran through the trenches driving out the men. Some of the braver soldiers flew like a bullet out of the trenches <sup>without being driven</sup> ~~themselves~~ and fell dead in the snow. Some an enemy bullet caught just as they emerged, and they fell back into the trench. Only the lucky ones were able to dive into the snow alive. Some of the soldiers, under the eye of an officer, pretended that they were going out for the attack and slowly stuck their heads above the trench. Enemy sharpshooters mowed down these daring ones without a miss.

It was clear that the artillery had not carried out its mission because of the shortage of shells. Certain Red Army soldiers, not wanting to go to certain death, procrastinated in moving out <sup>of</sup> the trench. An enraged lieutenant, a platoon commander, rushed up to such as these, shouted at them, kicked them, and if the soldier <sup>still</sup> ~~didn't~~ move from the spot, fired into the air next to his ear to drive the feeling of fright out of him.

This "fighting" continued for four hours. We didn't advance a step. Seeing no other way out of the situation, the commander of the infantry battalion on the left flank ordered the crew of a light gun to move it forward, taking cover behind the shield of the gun. The Germans tried to fire on it with machine guns and anti-tank rifles, but the gun answered with direct fire. This measure justified the hopes for it.

On the right seven tanks were supporting today's attack. The Germans did not once fire on them. But not one tank was able to reach the enemy trenches ahead of the infantrymen. Three tanks moved out into no-man's land and ran onto our own mines. The rest remained out of action, deciding not to risk the fate of the first.

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At four o'clock the Germans of their own accord left their trenches. It was still light when we, pushing our ZIS trucks and our guns through the snow by hand, arrived at the 8th of March Kolkhoz.

17 January. En route. Night.

We are moving to the south. Our worn-out trucks . . . are carrying the sleepy gun crews in pursuit of the enemy.

We have already taken some Magyar prisoners. They surrender without resistance. It is true that they are very much afraid of us. Some of our cold-blooded "heroes" can't resist shooting these prisoners, driving them out of the houses. Taking advantage of brief stops in the villages, these heroes run from house to house and satisfy their lust for blood on the Hungarians taking shelter from the cold.

Last night we met a column of Hungarians directly in our path. Wrapped up in whatever they could find, some with rifles and some unarmed, they stood motionless alongside the road as our column of trucks drew alongside. This time they were lucky. The assistant chief of staff and the [ ] head of the [ ] Komsomol organization (Komsorg) of the regiment, riding in the first truck, assembled them, disarmed them, and put a Jewish prisoner in charge of conducting them to the rear.

23 January. Alekseyevka Railway Station.

Winter is at its worst . . . Every day we take prisoners. We have not yet seen the most "pure-blooded Aryans"; we have only captured Magyars or "musicians" (Italians) so far. The latter surrender without resistance; properly speaking, there is no need for them to surrender; frozen and barely alive they have already surrendered to "Comrade Winter".

. . . Once we entered a "Magyar" village. Our scouts found 20 Russian prisoners there. They were no longer men, but mere skin and bones. They lay motionless on the floor and could not even talk. In this case our men did not leave a single Magyar alive in the village.

. . . .

1 February

A strange thing happened. The whole 8th Battery drank some captured

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anti-freeze, taking it for liquor. 13 died; 25 are in the hospital.

13 February

I am writing in the cab of a truck while waiting to cross the North Donets, near (I believe) Bol'shaya Pisarevka. The "bridge" . . . is only a flooring of ties laid on the ice. . .

16 February. Khar'kov.

After bloody fighting at the Kutuzovka Sovkhoz we entered Khar'kov. . .

/ 17 February. Morning. Khar'kov.

leaving

We are ~~entering~~ the city. The Khar'kov people receive us with indifference, saying nothing and not even responding to greetings. The young women look down on the Red Army men with air ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> disdain. By their facial expressions, one would think that we had changed for them pleasant sunny weather to autumn storms. An old man in whose home I stayed explained the reason for this.

"The ~~fact that~~ arrival of the Red Army is good. We are for the regime (vlast') Soviet ~~army~~ and against the Germans. Only we should like to have the Soviet regime without the Communists and the collective farms."

. . .

20 February. Krasnokutsk.

We arrived here from Khar'kov with very little fighting. . . However, we are in no condition to go farther. Out of twenty trucks we have only three left, and of these only one can move on its own power and carry a load. The staff of the regiment doesn't know where the batteries are. All the trucks of the ~~1st~~ 3rd Battery are out of commission, and nobody knows where the battery is. The 4th Battery is also without trucks, but . . . they have taken oxen from the inhabitants and this organized transport. The oxen are pulling a disabled three-ton truck. Of course, we are not suffering alone. The brigade headquarters hasn't a single truck; the staff officers are going around the villages and taking horses from the inhabitants and from soldiers who are unaccompanied by officers.

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What are we going to do now?

9.

5 February. Same place.

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Krasnokutsk.

X We are assembling our batteries from all over Khar'kov-Poltava <sup>area</sup> ~~area~~ guns, trucks and men. We found the ~~third~~ 3rd Battery; it has only one ton-and-a-half "Gazik" for a gun and ammunition. An ox is pulling its second gun, and horses the third. Men are pulling the fourth. . . .  
25 February.

Today the brigade CO, Bulatnik, was riding somewhere on horseback, without his insignia of rank, and failed to salute a passing general. The latter beat him almost to unconsciousness with his stick. It was a "wolf's treatment of a wolf." It served him right! Bulatnik himself had recently beaten up the regimental chief of staff for no reason at all; the man had nosebleed for two days.

26 February. Valki.

We managed to get the regiment together, and moved to Snezhkov<sup>V</sup> Kut. By orders of the brigade CO we are taking horses and oxen from the peasants.

27 February. Snezhkov Kut.

. . . Bulatnik gained us an advantage over the infantry: the command has authorized us to mobilize the men of the surrounding villages to make up for our losses. The recruits ~~prefer~~ would rather join us than the infantry. As soon as the commission, headed by the chief of the Political Section, appeared in the ~~town~~ city, German fighters began to fly over every day, disrupting our activity and scattering the men. Yesterday they dropped two bombs on our house. ~~manip~~ we had conscripted. ~~There~~ There are rumors that the local inhabitants are signalling to the enemy planes at night. ~~now is the time to fall~~

1 March. Snezhkov Kut.

We have gotten replacements. We found four German anti-tank guns and some ammunition in Valki for the 8th Battery. We have our recruits. True, they don't know <sup>one</sup> ~~which~~ end of the gun ~~from~~ from the other.

But we ~~even~~ designated some of them as chiefs of [gun] sections (komandir orudiya) and, for lack of experienced men, we even put a prisoner-of-war lieutenant in charge of a platoon (KRYZIAL).

The Germans are intensifying ~~their~~ attacks.

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1. The Germans attack. [redacted] unit, in the second echelon, do not  
 2. know the situation at the front; from the retreating first echelon they  
 3. receive varying reports as to the number of German tanks advancing  
 4. on them.

△ The Germans attacked from an unexpected quarter. Two batteries which were to have been moved there had failed to take up their positions because all the gasoline had been emptied from the tanks and transferred to the brigade fuel stores to prevent the men from using ~~them~~ it to light their huts.

~~Underneath~~ Under the attack of the German tanks on the village, among "the new recruits were seized by fright and ran off ~~into~~ the houses, ~~discarding their weapons~~ leaving their guns." /

The bombardment, the shells bursting in the streets, the burning houses, the jostle and cries of the fleeing men, and finally, the approach of the armored monsters on that day brought strain of the mental barometer of the troops to its limit - to the point of panic. Nobody had ordered anybody to retreat, but all were pulling out. Even the brave Buslay . . . made his way to the rear on a horse, having abandoned his car. He roared curses at the commanders of the infantry units for withdrawing left without fighting. And yet he had ~~withdrawn from~~ the town without warning his neighbor on the left of the danger. Even on the second day of the battle, when we had withdrawn to Kontakuzovka, in conversation with reconnaissance ~~with~~ ~~intelligence~~ officers of the unit on the left, Buslay not only concealed the fact that we had given up Snezhkov Kut, but actually bragged of his ~~achieved~~ successes:

"My second battalion of anti-tank riflemen are pouring out their blood in defense of Snezhkov Kut, while your infantrymen, having heard the sound of tanks twenty ~~miles away~~ kilometers away, have run off to Khar'kov. . ."

It appears that the 2nd PIR Battalion, about which Buslay bragged so much, had fled from Snezhkov but some of Buslay's men were back and over-  
took the 4 retreating troops in the rear.

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/ They succeeded in rallying the regiment at Kontakuzovka and making a stand. Recovering from their panic, the troops fought the German armored vehicles with great bravery on the second and third days of the battle. They had some success against the armored vehicles and tanks, letting them approach to within close range before opening fire, and then destroying many with the first volley. "The anti-tank rifle battalion generally could not stop the heavy tanks, but at Kontakuzovka it was able to knock out ten tanks by letting them ~~approach~~ draw near and then hurling grenades at them."/

e "However, into the combat their entered a psychological factor."

~~The Soviet troops had much to learn from the German tanks in terms of their superior technical equipment, and they lost their confidence in their own technical equipment.~~

The men who yesterday moved against the tanks and tried to take their crews alive, today fled from ordinary fire from ~~uncovered~~ covered positions. Worse than this: believing the stories of spreaders of panic about the approach of the tanks, the men of the batteries, like the infantry, left their positions before the tanks appeared. And nothing could stop this chaotic retreat of the mass of armed men. Detachments set to block their retreat / zagryad- (presumably error for "zagrad"-) otryady/, generals with ~~detachments~~ companies of sub-machinegunners, tried to shoot them, to threaten them, to persuade them - but the mass of men, at the sight of these officers, scattered and continued to flee.

. . . In the deciding engagement ~~then~~ we lacked the strength to hold out; we crumbled. The enemy had too great a ~~than~~ superiority in technical equipment, and was able to break our spirit and shake our faith in ourselves. . .

16 March. En route.

We are retreating. The Germans forced us out of Valki and are approaching ~~Bah~~ Bogodukhova unhindered. . .

12 March (I believe). Bogodukhov.

~~After~~ Since the unsuccessful battle at the railway station we are finally routed. Only a few ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ orderlies and messengers got out of the trap into which our brigade fell yesterday. Where the

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and  
batteries/ the regiment and brigade headquarters are, nobody knows.

Of ~~the~~ all the units and commands organized and ~~the~~ fitted out at ~~the~~  
the cost of so much effort, there remains only a disorganized mass.  
The roads are crowded with retreating wagons, trucks and fragmentary  
groups of men and officers. Hurrying, overtaking one another, day and  
night they are retreating, without knowing where nor why.

~~Where was this mass of men, horses and trucks when the fighting~~  
~~was going on? So~~

...

Besides the units which were actually engaged in combat, there is  
an even greater number of detachments not assigned to combat, but  
serving ~~with~~ staffs and rear units, transport and signals. As soon as  
things got difficult, the senior commanders ordered this superfluous  
personnel to move back into a safe zone. And after them, the lesser  
commanders send back their rear personnel, which created a panicky  
attitude among the combat troops. To the general movement to the  
rear is added the "urgent" withdrawal of some cowardly commanders,  
and thus begins a retreat before the enemy has struck his blow. This  
has always been so and cannot be otherwise. Many commanders tried to  
hold their staff and service troops near the place of combat and make  
them take part in the fighting; however, losing well-trained staff  
personnel, property and documents, they had to give up their plan.

50X1-HUM

A platoon of riflemen of an anti-tank battalion, -  
without their rifles. These were all healthy and experienced troops,  
not lacking in courage, and deservedly wearing many decorations.

At every step we kept meeting some general, who would ~~order~~ try  
by threats to stop us, ordering us to fight back to the last man.

Today I almost got into a quarrel with one general (later I realized  
that it was General-Major Kazakov, commander of our 69th Army). He  
ordered me to defend the railway station. I tried to explain to him  
that we were artillerymen, that our batteries and our equipment had  
been lost in combat, and that we now had only staff personnel and a  
group without weapons or ammunition. He wouldn't listen to my

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explanation. "If you have abandoned your guns and failed to hold your positions, then fight the German tank crews with your bare hands," he ordered. He had us stand our ground, unarmed, while he himself ~~was withdrawing~~ ~~went back~~ with his numerous retinue. /latter clause is crossed out in hand-written changes in ~~manuscript~~ ~~on~~ last few sentences/ I was amazed when he began asking us about the situation in the front lines. We, of course, ~~flinching~~ more fearing his anger than desiring to help him, gave him information about the last two days/. You see, you never tell him that you don't know anything! So we left him with this "information". ~~with~~ ~~was standing~~ ~~with a whip, right in~~ Before this I had met another general. This one ~~was standing~~ ~~in~~ driving the middle of the road, and ~~drove~~ back the retreating men. He, too, stopped me and demanded to know the situation. --How is it, I wondered, that such high officers do not know the situation? Now I understand: the Germans ruled the air, and the commander of the Army did not have a single ~~manuscript~~ reconnaissance plane in the sector.

14, 18 March. Grayvoron; Volchansk. Further minor details and ~~manuscript~~ ~~com-~~ments on the disorganized retreat./

20 March. Korocha.

The transport of the units of the brigade has assembled here. Here for the first time in the last two weeks I met the brigade CO. He is compiling materials on the activities of the regiment and other units of the brigade to present a document against accusations on account of the retreat. The Army and Front newspapers are praising our heroism, but the commissions of the higher headquarters are ~~compiling~~ drawing up document after document (akt) ~~to prosecute the commanders from their~~ ~~commanders~~ ~~bring the commanders to trial~~ /literally, "to responsibility"/. Truly, as someone has said, they handle us with a whip in one hand and candy in the other.

~~in the middle of the road~~  
§ 27 ~~Baran~~/Ul'shanka, also called Kozel.

on

A place off the road, accessible only by foot. . . The long-awaited 6th Guard Stalingrad Army has arrived and has stopped the Germans.

1 April.

They are carrying on intensified and speedy enrollment of new party members. . . Each commander is ~~bringing~~ ~~all the~~ ~~best~~ ~~man~~ soldiers ~~in~~ ~~into the party.~~

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## CHAPTER V

## THE BATTLE OF KURSK (May - August, 1943)

10 April. Pokrovka, on the highway between/ Belgorod and Kursk.

We have arrived here for ~~main~~ reorganization. Temporarily we form the second echelon of the defending troops and are about three kilometers from the German trenches. In view of the shortage of troops, sending us to the Urals or Moscow remains only a promise.

20 April. In the neighborhood of Pokrovka

Night. I can't sleep. We are in covered and slit trenches. This evening there were meetings to celebrate the First of May. The Political Section got a movie projector from somewhere, and after the official ceremonies we had a movie.

There is a ~~holiday~~ feeling of celebration, not, of course, because of the movie, but because of the arrival in the regiment of American Studebakers and Willys. I am learning to drive a Willys. That's not an automobile, but a mechanical marvel! With it you can keep up with any tank; in fact, off the roads it can beat a tank, especially on steep ~~shores~~ ~~mountain~~ slopes.

Now there will be three artillery regiments in the brigade instead of one. All of them have received American equipment for traction.

2 May. A ravine.

The world never saw a more insufferable man than Kruglov. He makes a fuss over every detail. Today, at four o'clock in the morning, he "tested" our sentry posts, and he woke up the whole headquarters of the regiment because a sentry passed him without asking for the password. The latter tried to justify himself on the ground that he had recognized ~~Kruglov~~. It-Col Kruglov even at a distance as the brigade commissar, and we defended the man as an excellent soldier, but Kruglov wouldn't listen, and ordered the "~~man~~ culprit" punished.

4 May. The same place.

Yesterday we went to call on the brigade commander. Liquor flowed like a river. The three chiefs of the brigade - the commander, the commissar (now deputy commander for political matters), and the

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chief of the Political Section almost came to the point of shooting each other. The commander was at ~~sumondishamp~~ swords' points with the commissar: he could not share his authority, and with the chief of the Political Section he quarreled over Marusya. And the latter, in turn, had some old causes for quarreling with Kruglov. The <sup>2</sup>liquor and the attitude of the commander and the commissar toward our opinion made the chief of the Political Section bold, and he began to upbraid Buslay. The latter didn't hesitate long ~~to~~ to put his ~~fist~~ fist in action. Not considering it proper to witness the quarreling of our superior officers, we left. We heard that anger carried them to the point of using their pistols, but the brigade counterintelligence officer (kontrrazvedchik) succeeded in separating them.

10 May. The same dugouts.

The front is now fixed, in an arc around Kursk, with the bases of the arc at Orel and Belgorod. We are at Belgorod. . .

We have a new brigade CO. He seems a more educated and a more agreeable man than Buslay. Kruglov has left for training, and the chief of the Political Section has disappeared somewhere. The whole command has changed. And I, your humble servant, have been moved from deputy commander to commander of the regiment.

11 May.

We have been quarreling with the new brigade commander for political affairs (po politicheskoy chasti) almost from the beginning.

Political training <sup>on</sup> ~~after~~ political training, meeting after meeting, political work among the officers and men, indoctrination in Bolshevi<sup>k</sup> consciousness and in boundless devotion to the party and to our leader -- such demands keep my head in a whirl all day. More time is spent in political training than in practical combat training. Judging by the strictness with which they require the political work, one would think that are troops are fighting the enemy only because of the political work, and that without it they would go to pieces and surrender to the Germans.

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Here, for example, is a list of the things which the Political Section of the brigade and the political apparatus of the regiment carried out yesterday, taking the men away from combat training:

1. For regiment party organizers (partorg): instruction on "how to organize political work when on the defensive."
2. For battery party organizers: a seminar on "The duties of the battery party organizer".
3. For chiefs of gun sections: a meeting (sbor) on "The anti-tank gun: an unassailable strong point."
4. For gun pointers: a meeting on "Hit the enemy without a miss".
5. For platoon commanders: a lecture on "How best to organize political training."
6. For editors of "Boyevye Listki" (mimeographed newspapers of the batteries): instruction.
7. For battery and section agitators: a seminar.
8. For battery readers (chitchiki) and talkers (besedchiki); instructions.
9. For battery song leaders: a meeting.
10. For the ~~men~~ <sup>men</sup> ~~active party members~~ of the batteries (holders of decorations): a meeting.
11. For the new members of the party: exercise in the study of party regulations.

In all the seminars and instruction devotion to the country and steadfastness in battle ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> demanded of the soldiers, as if ~~none~~ none of them had these qualities.

15 June. Loshchina. A covered trench 2 km southeast of Yakovlevka.

Yesterday ~~from~~ Gumenyuk, a soldier of the 3rd Battery, deserted. This was a ~~scandal~~ disgrace for the anti-tank regiment, whose personnel are chosen from the most reliable men. Apparently this was considered a greater disgrace than we expected. It seems that the chief of the Special Section of the regiment (polkovoy osobist) had his best spies (lazutchiki) in the 3rd Battery, getting information about Gumenyuk's intention; and the Party and Komsomol organizer had informed the Political Section. Apparently everybody who should <sup>had</sup> know about the preparation for desertion and was unable to prevent it. I also had heard talk, but didn't believe it.

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There was no end to the reports poured in to me. For two days, without rest or food, the chief of the Special Section went around on foot to the III /Centralno-razvedka unit/: examining posts describing Gumenyuk and ordering them to hold him. Today he took my Willys and went to the 6th Army HQ to report on Gumenyuk.

There, where they have ample supplies, there are no deserters. We have had a deserter because the food has been getting worse for the last month. We stay in one place, and have taken from the local population everything to be taken. The plan for ~~through~~ procuring supplies locally cannot be carried out. We have only 100 grams of American canned food a day to live on. There are no fats, no potatoes, no ground meal.

18 June. Same place.

Today was held the periodic meeting for the reading of the periodic (ocherednoy) order of /our "leader and teacher, who is personally and constantly concerned about the needs and requirements of the front." The People's Commissar has ordered the following awards and decorations: For the destruction of an enemy "Tiger" tank - the Order of Lenin; for the destruction of a self-propelled gun or a medium tank - the Order of the Red Banner. In addition, for every enemy tank knocked out there will be paid a cash prize of 2,000 rubles - 500 rubles each to the commander and <sup>gunner</sup> ~~gun-layer~~, and 200 rubles each to the five members of the crew.

<sup>started</sup>  
"They have ~~organized~~ capitalistic trade in heroism in our socialist Fatherland; one heroic deed ~~now~~ sells for 200 rubles," said the <sup>gunner</sup> ~~layer~~, <sup>carefully</sup> - Guring - of course, not for everybody to hear, but among his own men.

23 June.

I ~~shall be leaving~~ shall probably be leaving the regiment. I tempt myself with the hope that I shall be sent for training. They are always granting leave for training. However, men don't like to go to school, because the study is hard (12-14 hours a day) and the food there is worse than here.

1 July

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I haven't left yet.

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We have a Lieutenant Sonin who is a member of the party. He is a regular Moscovite, and in peace time had an important position in a banking institution of the capital, ~~because of his accuracy~~ and is in charge of financial matters for us. . . His punctuality, accuracy and neatness are praised by the whole staff of the army. There is no doubt of his devotion to his country. He is educated, business-like and intelligent. He has been twice decorated. Imagine such a man still not being a member of the Party!

The chief of the Political Section has learned of this "ugly fact", and now there is no peace either for Sonin or the party organizer. The latter was called to the Political Section and given a ~~panorion~~ "pep talk". ~~him~~ He had three sessions with Sonin, and then, confessing his helplessness, asked me to work on him. I had a talk with Sonin; he didn't want to be a Communist. I said to him quite frankly: "95% of these who join the Communist Party do not do so of their own accord, understanding the aims of the Party and sharing its viewpoint, but are pulled in by agitators and party organizers. And I recommend that you ~~join~~ get yourself enrolled to avoid being pestered any more." He liked my frankness and we parted good friends.

/ However, Sonin did not join the party for the next two months, despite "talks" with the ~~man~~ himself chief of the Political Section and political workers of various ranks; only the ~~intervention~~ influence of the chief of finance of the Army was finally able to make him join the party./

Yesterday I met Sonin again. . . He began to exchange thoughts with great frankness and sincerity. It appears that he not only did not want to ~~join~~ be a member of the Bolshevik party, but he thoroughly hated the Bolshevik regime; in his opinion, the government in the Kremlin was as great an enemy of the country as Hitler's Fascists. He served honorably and steadfastly ~~because~~ for his own self-respect and because he considered the war with Germany a just war.

~~It~~ This was the only time in a year of working in the same place with him that he and I spoke frankly on disturbing subjects. . .

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4 July. Solntsevo.

I have been to Army and Front HQ. My efforts to get leave for training have not succeeded, and tomorrow I go back to my unit. . . . I bought some milk in Prokhorovka for Soviet money. The people, <sup>having gotten</sup> used to German money, don't like to take our rubles.

5 July. Kochetovo.

. . . I saw great excitement in Army headquarters. It seems that the Germans have <sup>gone</sup> ~~cover~~ over to the offensive, with strong air and tank forces.

I hurry to my regiment. Will I find it intact? My one hope is the Studebakers; thanks to them we can maneuver our guns and men. But the German aviation! <sup>It ~~inhumanly~~ destroys</sup> ~~They have destroyed~~ everything. Let's hope that this time our ~~Yak fighters~~ <sup>(Yastrebki)</sup> will be in the air!

7 - 10 July, at Sukhosolotino. They are guarding the Belgorod-Kursk road. The air and artillery bombardment of the Germans is far worse than anything experienced before. However, ~~if~~ they dig in, lose only three trucks, and no guns or personnel. /

11 July. In a rye field near Kochetovka.

We have given up Sukhosolotino and a part of Kochetovka. . . . A good man, our new brigade CO! He didn't pin us down ~~with~~ with any stupid order about "holding out to the last man". Seeing that the Tigers were going <sup>but us with</sup> ~~around~~ around us on the left, he ~~pulls us back~~ <sup>pulls us back</sup> two kilometers and go to meet the Tigers from the flank. Thus we kept them from breaking through and <sup>are in</sup> ~~got out~~ safety ourselves.

15 July.

The Germans have been pounding our defences <sup>for</sup> ~~for~~ for ten days, with technical overwhelming <sup>superiority</sup> ~~superiority~~, but ~~they~~ have failed to attain their objective. / . . .

. . . Here only we are not ~~guards~~ a guards unit. All the others are Stalingrad or guards shock units. The commander of the 51st Guards Infantry Division, supporting us, <sup>says</sup> ~~says~~ that the battle at Stalingrad was child's play in comparison with ~~the~~ the fighting here on the Kursk arc.

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/ 17, 23 July; 3 August. Counter-attack by the Russians, who are beginning a big attack\_

6 August

. . . There has arrived an order of the commander of the front on the provision of clothing. Those killed in battle are to be buried only in their underwear. This means that coats and trousers are to be taken off the dead and ~~immediately handed over to the living~~ and then worn by the living. Instructions have been received from the Political Section to explain this order carefully to ~~the~~ all personnel as evidence of the care which the command of the Red Army shows for the needs of the troops.

When the master sergeants of the batteries were told of this order, they expressed unanimous indignation. "We are not going to take anything off the dead, but we'll outfit the battery in captured uniforms", they announced.

The men were angry, too, when the order was read to them. But the agitators, the Party and Komsomol organizers and the Party-Komsomol aktiv, having received instructions in advance, gave no one a chance to express himself. In the regular political report of the deputy regimental commander for political affairs <sup>(zampolit)</sup> there was written: "The personnel of the regiment greeted the order of the command with an unprecedented upsurge of military spirit and with the greatest approval. The Zampolit added a number of quotations from soldiers - wearers of decorations - who had greeted the order with extravagant praise.

don't  
 I ~~didn't~~ approve of the order, but I didn't dare say so openly. The brigade CO, however, expressed his indignation at it in the presence of the chief of the Political Section.

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7, 9 and 13 August. Heavy fighting, with Germans counter-attacking with planes and tanks/

14 August. A sunflower field.

. . . Germans attacking from Akhtyrka, from which they have driven us. . . We are busy collecting abandoned German trucks. The brigade CO has ordered the batteries to make up for each loss of a truck by capturing one in battle. . . The driver Demin got lubricating oil from a knocked out tank. Lack of such oil is seriously hindering our movement.

15 August.

We ~~ammunition~~ are milling around in one location.

A few days ago there arrived the guards army of General (former Marshal) Kulik. Its mechanized units were so unskillfully exposed to the attack of enemy aviation that 190 tanks were lost in a day. . .

16 August. A field south of Akhtyrka. Morning.

There never was such a commanding officer as in this 4th Guards Army! ~~himself~~

Every morning we fire out of thickets and thoroughly stir up the enemy; when the infantry rises to attack, every enemy fire point comes to life. We fire without topographical charts, by sight, and without thorough reconnaissance of the enemy. Sometimes we fire shells into an empty field. And worst of all is the remark of the CO:

"Let the gun and all its crew (seven men) perish before any infantryman is harmed."

Evening.

The brigade CO has ordered the award of the medal "For Meritorious Service in Combat" ("~~za boyevyye zaslugi~~ boyevyye zaslugi") to ~~any~~ <sup>any</sup> man responsible for the restoration to service of a captured truck-- for ~~2~~ two such trucks, the Order of the Red Star, or of the Patriotic War. Trucks have been and are what we lack most. Next to them is gasoline. . . . Plisovskiy, ~~thru~~ our regiment's auto repair king, went and got a small lathe from some shop in Kharkov, set it up on a repair truck and with it was able to make a number of ~~missing~~ parts

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which we lacked, and put several trucks back in service. My adjutant acquired two German armored carriers. For one he traded a liter of <sup>and</sup> liquor, a coat and trousers to some stragglers from a tank unit; the other he and I pulled out of no man's land <sup>the neutral strip</sup> with the help of the first, ~~fighting men~~ beating off our tank troops to do it. Since the tank troops had liberated this region, they demanded prior rights to captured equipment. A tank corps lieutenant <sup>take away</sup> colonel came to us to ~~get the prize~~, and threatened to run over my Willys with me in it as soon as we began to advance.

18 August. South of Akhtyrka.

. . . an episode from our lives. . . <sup>a</sup> ~~com~~ "comedy in three acts", with the principal role ~~played~~ played by Guards Major Mikola Petrichenko.

#### ACT ONE

Mikola's battalion arrived in a woods after a march through the rain. They were hot on the heels of the enemy and would have pressed on, but the <sup>g</sup> company commanders began to protest: "We can't go further; we must stop and rest and dry out." Besides, they were beginning to meet with resistance. Petrichenko had managed to get three of our batteries to strengthen his battalion.

"O.K., Mikola, give the Fritzes hell and march on!" ordered his regimental CO.

"Yes sir, Comrade Lieutenant-Colonel!" said Mikola.

#### ACT TWO

Following Petrichenko's orders, the three batteries fired on the heights occupied by the Germans, after which the groups of worn-out infantrymen tried to attack them. Let by a hail of machine-gun fire, they ran back, leaving ~~the~~ dead and wounded on the field.

"How goes it, Mikola? Did you attack the height?" telephoned the CO of the regiment.

<sup>and</sup> /Petrichenko explained the situation: the heavy enemy fire, the lack of sufficient shells for the guns, the weariness of his men, whom he begged permission to rest for a day. But the ~~major~~ regimental CO insisted: /

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"You attack again today and take the mound and the hill or the 'boss' (the division CO) will wring both our necks!"

Through the mud and the driving rain the company officers moved the men to the edge of the woods. A reconnaissance party went out, were fired on by the Germans, and returned with a report on the impregnable position of the Germans. Without anybody's permission, the companies dispersed to their huts.

Again a call from the regiment CO; again Petrichenko's protests against an immediate attack, asking to rest his men till morning; and again the CO's insistence on an immediate attack and a report within two hours.

The company commanders were called together. They categorically refused to advance. The platoon officers were assembled. They said: "All right, we'll lead the men out among the bullets and die with them, but what's the use? Without artillery preparation, we'll never drive the enemy off the hill!" Two hours were wasted in argument. Moreover, it was explained that some of the platoons had nothing to eat; the <sup>master</sup> sergeants had gone for food and not returned. . . .

~~Again~~ The time arrived to report to the regiment CO. The latter called up: "Well, you loafer, why haven't you reported?"

"Sir, you can ~~bring me~~ court-martial me and shoot me, but I can't raise the men to attack again today--you can do what you like with me--relieve me of duty right away and shoot me if you want!"

"Don't be a fool, Major; ~~Remember~~ remember, you're a Bolshevik, and don't talk nonsense! We'll shoot you, all right, if we have to!"

Next the division CO called Petrichenko:

"Mikola, you son of a bitch, if you don't report within an hour that you've taken the hill, I'll ~~take your~~ skin you alive! . . ."

ACT THREE

The specified time has elapsed.

The chief of staff of the division calls: "Major, two hours have passed. Have you taken the hill?"

"Yes sir."

"Move your headquarters there and string a telephone line to it!"

"Yes, sir."

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"Exploit your success and move the battalion forward!"

"Yes, sir."

The regiment CO called<sup>s</sup>: "Thank you, Mikola; you saved my life. The general is raising a storm. I know you won't let me down."

The assistant chief of staff of the regiment/appears: "Mikola, why aren't you on the hill?"

"The Fritzes counter-attacked with five tanks. We had to withdraw."

The FISH leaves. The regiment CO, beside himself with rage, calls. Petrichenko calms him: the hill has been taken again!

As a matter of fact, the battalion is just going on drying its ~~puttees~~ puttees. In the morning someone comes ~~hunch~~ from Division HQ comes to check. The company~~s~~ commanders, all in cahoots, in friendly fashion convince him that they have taken the hill twice, but withdrawn under tank attack.

So by deceit the battalion CO was able to endure two days of angry attacks from higher headquarters and give his men a chance to rest and get dried out. On the third day the sun came out, the artillery got ammunition, and after laying down accurate artillery fire, the artillerymen helped the infantry to take the hill without the loss of a man.

21 August. Reshetilovka.

I have just arrived here. The brigade CO ordered to have charged to ~~his~~ my account and to that of the commanders of the batteries the value of the excess gasoline consumed in the movement from Akhtyrka. There were either no roads, or they were muddy and impassable, and gasoline consumption the allowance exceeded ~~allowance~~ for normal movement on the highway. A fine of thirteen times the amount is levied. In this case 727 rubles was charged to my account.

22 August. On the bank of the Khorol River.

We have been stuck here for two days. The bridge has been blown up, (very wisely) and we have no gasoline. The brigade CO has ordered ~~(very wisely)~~ us to ~~empty~~ empty the gasoline from the trucks into cans and hide it from ~~higher head-~~ the eyes of quarters.

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...  
 27 August.

Today I am feeling good, and am moved to write a few lines about the fighting we have gone through.

The gigantic attack of the German forces began on the 5th of July. That was a battle in which one side was determined to break through, and the other, not to let them pass. It was an encounter between two ~~different~~ kinds of military tactics and two kinds of human psychology. ~~The~~ ~~German~~ The German tactics counted on breaking up the Russian defence throughout its depth by mighty, concentrated blows from the air, and by inflicting ~~an~~ decisive blows with armored forces to break through into maneuvering space and move on to a junction with the forces coming to meet them from Orel. These tactics depended on powerful technical equipment in the experienced hands of disciplined troops.

Our tactics were based on localizing the blow of the enemy by constructing movable (maneuverable) lines of defence in previously prepared positions, and while concentrating in these positions great masses of anti-tank artillery, saving the air and tank forces for a decisive counter-attack. The mainstay of these tactics were men, willing to sacrifice themselves, and less well-equipped technically.

The former tactics gambled first on equipment, and then on men; the latter, the Russian tactics, -- first on men, and then on equipment. The Germans counted first on aviation, then on tanks; in our forces, the main reliance was on artillery and infantry, and then on tanks; aviation played hardly any part in the battle.

In this battle the Germans displayed the size and might of their weapons, their ability to organize perfect coordination in the operations of great masses of troops, and great persistence toward the accomplishment of a planned goal.

In these engagements the Russian troops showed ~~unlimited~~ unlimited heroism, ~~and~~ a readiness to make any sacrifices, and the greatest endurance and firmness of spirit. The Russian command displayed exceptional ability to get itself out of difficult situations, and kept its confidence in the strength ~~and~~ ability of its troops.

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The German ~~ability to operate~~ habit of operating according to a pattern ~~was~~ is good, if the enemy also operates according to the pattern; that is to say, if he fights ~~fairly~~ fairly. But this habit ~~was fatal~~ is fatal if the enemy resorts to "tricks", i.e., if he guesses your pattern and takes counter-measures.

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29 August. Brovari.

This little town has been burned. . . In this region the Germans are burning the towns as they leave them. . . Apparently they have no hopes of returning. . . For the most part, only children and old people are left here. They say that the Germans have driven off with them the young and able to work.

CHAPTER VI  
THE DNEPR BRIDGEHEAD / PLATSDARM /  
(ON THE DNEPR RIVER, ~~SEVENTEEN~~ NORTH OF KIEV)

30 August. / Crossing of the Desna River /

9 September. The left bank of the Dnepr.

. . . We have not crossed the river yet ~~there~~; . . . there is nothing on which our Studebakers can cross. The infantry are crossing ~~mm~~ in boats taken from the local population, and on rafts.

What they say in the orders and in the press about the bridgehead on the other bank is exaggerated at least a thousand times. Actually, there is no bridgehead; there are only individual groups of our ~~h~~ troops entrenched among the bushes within a hundred meters of the river bank.

20 September. The right bank of the Dnepr.

the  
/ They have crossed the river and are in what appears to be ~~mm~~ old river bed; the enemy is able to fire down on them from a high steep bluff which forms a semi-circle around them.  50X1-HUM  
indifference to death of the engineers who built the bridge; one after another they were killed by air ~~mm~~ attack or artillery fire, but each time others stepped forward unhesitatingly to take their places. /

. . .

25 September.

"One man's misery is another's amusement", remarked the commander of a battery of the 2nd Regiment. . . . I want to relate just one of the tragicomic stories from our life.

The artillery defending Lyutezh were in a difficult situation. There were not enough infantrymen to cover the artillery positions. Enemy sub-machine gunners were ~~h~~ sneaking through to the gun crews at night, falling on them unexpectedly, ~~and then annihilating them,~~ annihilating them,

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and getting away unpunished. Two guns were "stolen" by the enemy.

The 4th Battery of the 2nd Regiment was in a specially bad position. place, They were in a wooded ~~place~~ difficult for observation, which was a wedge deep into enemy territory. However, they were blessed with potatoes, occupying a sector recently taken from the enemy, who, well fed, doesn't need to dig in our fields.

The CO of the 2nd Regiment, wanting to take advantage of his monopoly of this ~~valuable~~ precious land, ordered them not to let outsiders into the field, and to dig up all the potatoes for the regimental supply storehouse.

Neighboring units, especially the long-suffering infantry, repeatedly begged buckets of potatoes from the 4th Battery CO, but this rich land-owner remained deaf to their pleas. Since the potato-owner was so heartless, the CO of the ~~adjacent~~ neighboring mortar troops ordered his men to sneak into the field at night. One night three of them had crept silently into the field when, unfortunately, one of them made a noise with a bucket.

"Halt! Who goes there?" called the sentry of the forward gun.

Fearing being caught, or, more important, being left without their potatoes, the "robbers" fell to the ground and remained quiet.

"Who goes there?" repeated the sentry.

There was no answer.

"~~From~~ Germans from the rear!" cried the sentry in fright and awakened his comrades.

/ Then followed pandemonium. The gun crew ran back to their platoon commander in a panic, reporting that enemy sub-machine gunners had surrounded them. The potato ~~producers~~ thieves ran off, making a noise with their buckets and shovels, and alarmed the neighboring gun crews, who began to fire wildly, and soon the whole sector was awake and firing from rifles and guns.

The excitement reached the ears of the division CO. A reconnaissance officer reported to him: "A group of the enemy, in strength about a battalion of sub-machine gunners, have attacked our artillery positions

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and are trying to break through to the town. They have already taken the area of our forward guns".

The division CO ordered artillery and mortar fire directed against the "enemy". . .

Shells from our own guns were rained on the poor gunners in the potato field. ~~man~~ They, having exhausted their ammunition, made their way ~~back~~ under fire back to our own troops and reported that they had fought bravely against the enemy.

~~man~~ . . . The commander of the battery will always remember that day: he is still getting bawled out because of the crew that left its gun. 5 October. The same place.

/ Reports trouble between a sergeant of the 2nd Battery with some Czechoslovak soldiers of Colonel Svoboda's brigade - again over potatoes. The Czechs had previously kept Kolosov's men out of a field held by them; ~~this time~~ this time the sergeant drove two Czechs out of his field with insulting remarks. /

I should remark that the Czech soldiers ~~had~~ have all new shoes and ~~uniforms~~ clothing; they get food and uniforms out of turn, even though they ~~had~~ have taken no part in battle. They move forward only in the second echelon, or "fight" only where it is absolutely certain that there is no serious danger.

Our brigade CO had the right word for them when he called this brigade a "puppet show".

6 October. Staryye Petrovtsy.

With the help of "Katyusha's" and "Andryusha's" we succeeded in driving the enemy out of two villages. ~~These are the nicknames for weapons; Katyusha is a multi-rail rocket launcher; Andryusha probably also a rocket launcher.~~ / . . .

10 October.

Now for the first time a bridge is in operation across the Dnepr, and as the result of a clever trick. The part next to the shore is on piles, that is the middle on pontoons. All night long there is concentrated activity in crossing the river, but by dawn the pontoon part has been taken away, and it looks as if we had started to build the bridge and abandoned it. The Germans now leave us in peace and pound away at a "bridge" north of us, to which the engineers have moved all the materials ~~where they~~ and go through bridge-building motions to attract the attention of the flying Fritzes.

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15 October

The Germans apparently realize that the Russian command attaches much importance to this beachhead, and they are determined not to let us advance. Our tanks are trying to attack their positions, but without the success. We now have English "Churchill" and "Valentine" tanks. They ~~now~~ cross the Desna and the Dnepr at a ford. A few minutes ago I saw four Valentine tanks go into action; they were knocked out as soon as they appeared before the German positions. They say that they are excellently equipped inside, ~~the same~~. . . that they have an automatic ejector by means of which the crew can be thrown ~~out~~ <sup>free</sup> on pressing a button.

X Today our regimental wagon train arrived in the area of the ~~river~~ river-crossing with ~~supplies~~ provisions. Thanks to it we now have a good ~~supply~~ store of provisions and often supply brigade <sup>6</sup> headquarters. . .

12 October /sic/

Yesterday I inspected the 3rd Battery. Only the collar, ~~many~~ sleeves and skirt of each soldier's coat remains; the back and front are in tatters.

13 October

Captain Lisovski (deputy CO of the regiment for technical matters) has just been here and reported that two German armored carriers were stuck in no-man's-land. He asked for a good Studebaker truck and some demolition men, with the help of which he hoped to tow them across to our side. I ~~am~~ ordered him to get them at once and get them in running order quickly.

14 October.

So far there have been no results with the armored carriers. The brigade CO heard of our plan to pull them out with the Studebaker, and he called me and ordered me to take no chances with the foreign truck. Now that the brigade CO knows about them, we absolutely must get the armored carriers. The brigade CO required me to post guards to let no one from another unit ~~approach~~ get near the carriers.

The night of 15-16 October.

. . . Captain Lisovski and the driver I sent out ~~after~~ the armored carriers day before yesterday returned empty-handed.

When I reported this to the brigade CO, he lectured me severely: "If you

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can't make your subordinates do it, go and pull out the carriers yourself, and don't ~~look me in the eye until you have done so!~~ look me in the eye until you have done so!"

I know how hard it is for ~~the~~ regimental headquarters and the rear units to travel on horseback and on foot after the batteries who ride in Studebakers, and how the combat activities of the regiment ~~are affected~~ suffer from lack of transport. So I set out without a word and with the help of two experienced drivers succeeded in getting one machine running and with it towed out the other. Machine gun fire, heavy at first, died down later, and there was no enemy mortar fire at all. To be sure, the night was so dark you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. 1

~~On 21 October 26 October 1941~~

21 October.

. . For several days we have been preparing for an ~~mm~~ attack, first set for the 20th, and then changed to the 25th. . .

26 October

. . . Much artillery has arrived. The "Andryusha's" are already in positions ~~exposed~~ for combat. the "Katushkas" and tanks are concealed in the woods. . .

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## CHAPTER VII

### THE BATTLES FOR KIEV

The morning of 3 November 1943. An advanced observation point three km from Staro-Petrovtsk.

#### Description of artillery barrage for the attack

The night of 3-4 November. In the woods.

X . . . In general the break-through ~~properly~~ has succeeded well this time. After a two-hour artillery barrage the infantry crossed no-man's-land without difficulty. The tanks were delayed a little by the mine fields, but by <sup>noon</sup> ~~supper time~~ they had advanced. After them followed our anti-tank batteries. Upon entering the woods, we were attacked by our own planes. In vain we shot off rockets and signalled with red flags. All that saved us was that our ~~paratrooper~~ flyers couldn't hit their target.

. . .

7 November. Kiev

Morning. We are getting ready to go through Kiev, which has just been taken.

On the evening of the fifth, approaching Kiev, the batteries had an unsuccessful engagement with the enemy. . . Remembering the order of the brigade CO -- that the anti-tank artillerymen should get into the city first and <sup>grab</sup> ~~capture~~ as many ~~motor vehicles~~ <sup>motor vehicles</sup> German ~~vehicles~~ <sup>as possible</sup>, -- the commanders of three batteries decided to go ahead of the infantry. The trucks formed into a column, lead by Lieut. Naumov, and rushed into the city. They succeeded in crossing the railroad bridge, passed the burning "Bolshevik" plant, and then ~~when~~ suddenly were met by the fire of two German tanks, which destroyed five trucks and inflicted ~~many~~ casualties without loss to themselves while the Russians were rushing to bring their own guns into action.

We suffered greater losses in entering the city than any other unit. Worst of all, Naumov had both eyes shot out.

~~Naumov~~ Because it was my duty to do so, I imposed punishment on the commanders of the ~~unit~~ <sup>part</sup> in this action.

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They had left the outskirts of Kiev on the eighth; orders were to press on the heels of the Germans, who were retreating to the south.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ the general, in his worn-out Opel, ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ was him stuck in the mud.  
~~\_\_\_\_\_ murdered \_\_\_\_\_ to make \_\_\_\_\_ more easily~~

reconnoitred in his jeep as far as a village a half  
by the inhabitants  
hour's drive ahead, was informed/that ~~some~~ the Germans had left  
that morning,  
~~only to find out~~ and that no Red Army troops had been there  
yet. He returned with this news to the general, still stuck in the  
mud. The latter dismissed it as lies by pro-German elements and persisted  
in his previous attitude and orders.

He eventually encountered German prepared positions, discovered his mistake, and escaped after being fired upon; only the driver was shot. /

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15 November. On the march.

The Germans have stopped our attack; as a consequence of the counterattack of the enemy tanks, we are forced to wander/back and forth along the line of the front, plugging up the holes in our ~~main~~ line wherever they appear. These holes are becoming more and more numerous. In the direction of Fastov the Germans are making a big attack, and it looks as if their aim is to give us a bath in the Dnepr. Yesterday a large number of tanks attacked the position of the <sup>2nd</sup> ~~second~~ Regiment of our brigade. One gun crew fled from the field of battle. The commander of this regiment, who was with the battery at this time, brought back the gun crew and shot the chief of the gun section and the gunner. Then he himself took charge of firing the piece until the tanks were driven off. The resolute and bold action of this regimental commander was noted today in a special order of the brigade CO. On instructions from the political section, this fact is being made the subject for political activity in the batteries.

18 November. On the march.

The counterattack of the enemy has developed into a big counter-offensive. Zhitomir, taken last week, has been lost to the enemy again. Tanks are breaking through right and left, and we are kept on the run trying to stop the ~~m~~.

21 November. Stavishche.

~~We hold the eastern group of houses in the town, the enemy, the western group.~~ In this town, built along a motor highway, ~~the enemy holds the western group of buildings,~~ we, the eastern. The Germans are trying to approach from the south and west. Calling for "super-vigilance", the chief of staff of the brigade, Colonel Tereshchenko, was wearing out the soldiers on details for patrolling the town. He feared that enemy reconnaissance parties ~~might~~ might destroy brigade headquarters in the darkness. For two nights he designated the patrols ~~and instructed them himself.~~ On the third

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night he was called away somewhere, returned dead-tired, and with no interest in anything, tumbled into bed. Imagine the general surprise when the next morning two enemy armored carriers were discovered stuck in the ditch beside the road behind brigade headquarters. It seems that ~~immediately after that~~ there had been no patrols out the night before. Tereshchenko was away; the brigade CO didn't worry about it, trusting to the infantry battalion ahead. The battalion had pulled out in the evening without warning anybody. ~~It was replaced by a~~ It was replaced by a school of lieutenants (shkola leytenantov) (also a battalion). The commander of the school ordered the officer candidates (kursanty) to take a bath for the night before ~~disposing themselves in combat~~ *taking combat positions.* ~~combat order.~~ So, each ~~relying on the other,~~ relying on the other, we slept without a guard.

Fortunately, the mud served us well. We captured both carriers and put them in running order. . .

23 November. Eastern outskirts of Stavishche.

Terrible days and nights continue, although the enemy attacks succeed almost nowhere. . . Tank replacements ~~arrived~~ have arrived for us.

25 November. Stavishche. Evening.

Conversation between two sergeants:

"Drunk again, Vas'ka? Why do you drink so much?

"To set you a good example, *stupid.*"

"*By drinking all the time? I don't get it.*"

"Well, when you die, say, tomorrow--and you certainly will die, if not tomorrow, then the day after, or within a week, or later--you'll lie ~~somewhere~~ somewhere unburied, and you'll begin to rot right away; the worms will eat you, without even leaving enough for fertilizer. With me it's different; I'm thoroughly soaked in alcohol, and bodies preserved in alcohol don't decay. Even Lenin ordered that he be put in alcohol after his death. So wherever I fall I'll keep forever;

I won't even lose the bloom ~~of my face~~. Savvy?"

26 November. In a wood by the Malin-Kerosten' road.

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... Somewhere between Korosten' and Zhitomir German tanks defeated our ~~main~~ cavalry corps. They were surrounded; they abandoned their horses, and a great part of them were taken prisoner. . .

1 December. Chipovichi.

Here, at the junction of the First Ukrainian and the Belorussian fronts, the enemy is trying to advance, attacking our position with large concentrations of tanks.

The Germans have gotten the idea of covering the surface of their tanks with something like a cement mixture; because of this our shells seldom penetrate their armor, but ricochet.

We take the fuel, lubricating oil and batteries from all the tanks which we knock out.

. . .

26 December. A wood southeast of Chipovichi.

We have begun an attack today. . .

. . . I am waiting for the Willys to be filled ~~in~~ with oil. The drivers' complains of the shortage of lubricants. They issue him only 5% of the weight of gasoline he gets/. . .

5 January. Near Lyubar.

. . . Yesterday our worn-out men arrived in a <sup>town</sup> ~~suburb~~ at two o'clock in the morning and ~~was intended~~ intended to rest a while. As usual, as a precaution, the guns were deployed for combat. Suddenly, from God knows where, several tanks attacked the ~~suburb~~ town. They came roaring out the darkness at top speed, running over the shrubbery, firing their cannon and machine guns. Our gunners ~~gave~~ fired one volley at them, and then another. Only later did we learn that this was ~~one~~ one of our own tank companies, which, believing the town not yet liberated, had undertaken a "psychological" attack. We burned up two of their tanks.

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20 January. A forester's ~~house~~ house east of Stavishche.

Our whole brigade had become so exhausted and weakened that the command considered it necessary to withdraw us to a "rest center" (kurort). At first ~~intended~~ our "convalescent" period was ~~intended~~ fixed at three days, so great is the need for us at the front. Now they intend to send us back into action in a week.

We have received 27 fine new Dodges and 9 cripples ~~(overhauled)~~ (overhauled Soviet trucks) One cripple didn't even get to the regiment; ~~its~~ its clutch was burnt out. Three of the cripples were not suitable for towing the guns; they were only two-wheel drive.

Nevertheless, we are happy, especially the brigade CO. . . . He called in ~~each~~ one at a time the drivers of each regiment and personally read him the instructions on the care of the foreign trucks.

27 ~~January~~ January. On the highway between Zhitomir and Slavuta.

We have just arrived here from Zhitomir and now must go back to somewhere near Belaya Tserkov'. It means a march of 600 km, to the left flank of the front.

Night. Same day.

/Describes the passage at night, with the headlights burning, of the column, of more than a hundred trucks, of the brigade/

1 February. Stavishche.

We have suffered the greatest loss of the whole war! We have lost 17 Dodges; ~~and~~ I say nothing about the losses of guns and ~~men~~ men; these latter are less terrible than the loss of the foreign trucks.

From Slavuta, where we supported the attack of the 60th Army of ~~the~~ Colonel-General Chernyakhovskiy, we were ~~transferred~~ put under the command of the 40th Army, whose 47th Infantry Corps was retreating in panic before the onslaught of the enemy. This corps was ridiculed over the whole front as the "run-away corps", for wherever it was

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put it invariably retreated. On this occasion it was our lot to fight in their ranks. The headquarters of the front reported that the 40th Army headquarters was in Yablonovka. . . . All three of our regiments rushed toward that place. By sundown we had arrived at the little town of Vinograd. It was still 15 km to the army headquarters. Retreating units informed us that the enemy had already taken Yablonovka and ~~was~~ was approaching Vinograd. And in fact, in half an hour . . . we saw black dots in the snow moving toward us from the hill on the left. These were Soviet soldiers and some local inhabitants, fleeing from the neighboring town. . .

"Deploy the regiments!" ordered the brigade CO. The first regiment under me was defending Vinograd. The second took up positions on the road to Yablonovka. The third was deployed in the southern outskirts <sup>Vinograd</sup> ~~/of Yablonovka/~~. We had provisions and ammunition for five days of combat; on the sixth day we would be supplied by planes if ~~we~~ we were surrounded. All right, anti-tank men, now let's see how you will fight against the enemy infantry!

(damaged)

This time we were well armed, having with the normal two allotments / (komplekt boyepripasov) of ammunition/which heretofore we had never had. Besides this, I had ordered my regiment to stock up with 25 belts of ammunition per gun for the recently issued machine guns instead of the six provided for in regulations. All together, our regiment had not less than 50,000 cartridges.

The battle began.

The batteries, all the line personnel of regimental headquarters, and the clerks of brigade headquarters who were beside us--all fought to the limit -- to the point where we were using grenades. Still the enemy came on, in spite of his losses, and ~~finally~~ finally ~~a~~ succeeded in destroying our forces. All the platoon leaders and gun commanders in the first battery were killed; the battery commander was wounded twice and put out of action. In the ~~the~~ second battery the battery commander was left alone with a small group of signalmen, and himself fired ~~the~~ a gun till he ran out of shells. In all the other batteries every gun commander and gunner was ~~killed~~ killed or wounded, and the guns were fired

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and Antonov, which we supposed to

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the enemy. A kilometer away from Vinograd, in a field we saw the silhouettes of men stumbling in the snow. This was the brigade CO and what was left of his headquarters. It seems that they had abandoned the headquarters equipment, trucks, signal equipment, cyphers, secret orders, etc. and fled on foot across the fields through the deep snow. <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>

Only this morning we were so happy and self-confident, ready to undertake the most difficult combat. Now, a few hours later, we were retreating, completely routed, with scarcely a hundred of our comrades left in our ranks. We were retreating, low in spirit and with no strength left, beset by fear of what the command would say about the defeat we had suffered.

4 February.

We are mustering the exhausted regiment. With the remaining trucks and guns we are again being put into combat condition. The second battery, which we had counted lost, got out of the encircle-~~ment~~ through the fields and the snow thanks to the new trucks. Local Ukrainian inhabitants led them out of the trap.

~~Insert above~~ The chief of the political section suffered an especially serious loss. As he put it, his clerk in charge of ~~political~~ political documents "abandoned to the enemy" 157 blank party cards, the seal of the political section, and the special ink used for filling in the party cards and for the ~~specimens of~~ so-carefully-guarded stamps.

5 February.

We are being reformed (we have gotten replacements) and at the same time are engaging in combat. <sup>In place</sup> ~~Instead~~ of the American trucks lost in combat they have given us five creeping tarantasy\* taken from some brigade which was put out of action. Guns we received promptly on the second day after reporting our losses.

\*/ A tarantas is ordinarily a type of springless, horse-drawn wagon, usually covered. May be used ~~depreciatively~~ in a depreciative

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sense for a poor quality truck in this case, or for a motor vehicle named after this type of wagon.

7 February.

The commander of the 40th Army has been trying to court-martial the brigade CO on the grounds that ~~he~~ failed to arrive at the area of concentration in time, and engaged the enemy elsewhere than where it was supposed to. Commission after commission has been visiting us; there is no time to command the batteries.

20 February.

of Tarashcha  
We have been ~~moving~~ moved south to/wipe out the German groups surrounded in the Korsun'-Shevchenkovekiy region. The lack of roads and the mud during the movement have finally exhausted our strength. The trucks either broke down on the road or got stuck in the mud. We have scattered the regiment along the road and are in no condition for combat.

20 February. Belaya Tserkov'.

We are recuperating here after our defeat. A ChePe ~~case~~ "extraordinary incident" / has occurred, stirring up the regiment.

Barantsov had issued an order to remove all women from the anti-tank units. Even the brigade CO and his chief of staff will have to send away their "military girl friends." And however much the brigade chief of staff tried to keep "the only/female/radio operator in the brigade", and no matter how he tried to influence Barantsov, either by seeking sympathy or by threats to leave the brigade, it was of no use. And of course Lieutenant Kartavkin and the nurse, Grobova, could not expect sympathy or help from anyone. But Grobova, after being collecting sent to the ~~assembly~~ point with the other women, returned to the regiment of her own accord in five days, and announced ~~on the radio~~ "You can kill me, but flatly: 'I'm not going to leave my man!'" / muzh - also, and usually, "husband", but apparently not in this case.

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was brought

The case of Kartavkin and Grobova ~~communist~~ before the Party Bureau (Partburo) (they are both communists). The party ordered them to "correct their error which was unworthy of a Bolshevik". They refused to submit to this. Yesterday Grobova shot Kartavkin in the hand so that they could go to the rear together. We've had all kinds of worries, but this is the limit!

25 February. Novomiropol'.

We have been attacking. Everything was going well; even after running on to our own mine fields we got off with light losses, but here we have suddenly had to stop; there is no more fuel. The men are bathing and washing their underwear. The movie ~~machinery~~ projector is running all day long in the local school.

. . . I am writing now to tell of my meeting with Kruglov, the former commissar of the brigade. Who could have imagined the contempt for political agitation and for bolshevist education ~~which~~ ~~hypnotism~~ which this man held in the secret recesses of his soul - he who, ~~as a communist~~ it would seem, was a thoroughly devoted old Bolshevik! Kruglov has just come from Moscow from training. He is not now a political worker, but a combat tank officer, on his way to his unit. He has been literally reborn; I had never seen him laugh before; he was always taciturn, serious and unapproachable. Now he jokes, sings songs, and tells dirty stories and anti-Soviet anecdotes. He is especially sarcastic ~~about~~ about the political workers (politrabotniki), making fun of their vocation of "educating" the masses. I couldn't believe my ears and was suspicious, wondering if he weren't trying to lead me into a trap.

Yesterday I ~~fixed up~~ <sup>arranged</sup> a party for him, with some drinks. Captain Talismanov, party organizer (partorg) of the regiment sat at the table with us. Kruglov most frequently addressed him in the conversation. For example, Kruglov asked him:

"Captain, what is your main function as party organizer? You don't know, of course, 'our still young well, I'll tell you: your job is to

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be a eunuch. You know that in oriental countries the eunuch guards the wives of his master. Well, you guard the party cell. You're not only a eunuch, but even greater "trust" is put in you; the party "trusts" you to be a cleaning rag. For example, if a gunner, a communist, has "soiled" by his "unworthy act" the crimson banner of the party, you have to clean the party's banner. I would say that another of your "functions" is to serve as toilet paper, to be thrown away after it is used, but I don't want to offend you, because you're too young."

Kruglov kept up a similar conversation all evening. He did all the talking himself, without interruption, and nobody tried to stop him. Only when he fell asleep, with his head on the table, did we end the "supper" at five o'clock in the morning.

. . . .

1 March. On the march.

We are at Lyubar' again. . . and are continuing a three-hundred-kilometer march through Zhitomir, Slavuta and Ostrug/ to the Shumsk region.

of

Kruglov spent three more days/drinking with us; then I took him to the tank brigade.

With the new brigade commander things get balled up with every little detail.

3 March. Shumsk.

(Last night the regiment spent) in Ostrug, the first border city. I was received here by the local Russians at a richly laden table. There were expressions of fear and distrust on their faces.

4 March. Shumsk.

We spent the night here, after posting a strong guard in front of the house. We had already been warned in Ostrug about the activities of the so-called "Bënderevtsy" /followers of Bandera, the Ukrainian partisan leader/. ~~Minam~~ We were told that they attack small German units, and ~~do the same with the~~ Red Army units, <sup>as well,</sup> ~~they massacre small German units~~ and also that they massacre all the Poles--women, children and old people. What is this, political warfare or banditry?

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6 March. Bel'ke Zagaytse, Dederkal'sk' Rayon.

. . . The Germans still hold the western outskirts of the town. We are going to try to drive them out today with artillery fire. . .

We are being exhausted by the mud and lack of roads.

Walls of the houses here are covered with slogans: "Down with Hitler and Stalin! Down with the kolkhozes and the Fascist concentration camps!"

7 March. Bel'ke Zagaytse.

Night before last, as we have now found out, we spent the night at the home of the chief of the local Banderists. We were certainly lucky; we slept without even a guard, and nothing happened to us, while last night the Banderists killed a foraging party of ours right in Shumsk.

12 March. Katyrburg.

. . We have surrounded Katyrburg . . but have not the strength to advance.

Idleness is corrupting the men. There were few complaints during the first days, but now they are pouring in. Day before yesterday they killed a peasant's cow, yesterday they stole a hen, and today a <sup>Roman</sup> Catholic priest <sup>[ksëndz]</sup> complained of the loss of a chasuble which he had hidden in a bee hive.

~~\*[ksëndz] - ~~Polish~~ Roman Catholic priest, in Poland/~~

13 March.

I have just come from the priest. The chasuble was found. It was in another hive.

I climbed up in the church. From it the positions of the enemy are visible for a long ways. The commander of the 1st Battery wanted to set up an observation post there, but the priest began to protest, and the battery commander yielded to the man of the cloth.

I have made friends with the priest. He runs to me without complaints of losses, and I go to drink tea with honey with him.

At the opposite end of the street stands the Ukrainian church. Apparently nothing is in order there; the doors stand wide open.

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15 March. Zbarazh. Night.

Probably hunters in a marshy swamp move with the same difficulty and slowness as we do here. We have been travelling for three days <sup>and nights</sup> already.

~~mmmmmm~~ They moved us from Katyrburg to the Kremenets-~~h~~ Zbarazh highway.

We found that a bridge was destroyed there, and we had to look for a detour. Now our column is strung out along the streets of Zbarazh. . .

16 March. Fridrikhovka. Morning.

~~mm~~ With the help of God we have dragged ourselves from Zbarazh and through Medyn' / Volochiysk to Fridrikhovka. ~~mm~~ The men have not had any sleep for three days, ~~and in the night~~ and now we are ordered to dig in and await an encounter with tanks.

Noon. The order is; "All clear; move ahead", after the men had spent their last strength in digging fire positions. . .

Midnight. At last I have had a drink of ~~mmmmmm~~ hot tea in a warm hut, and shall fall into bed immediately.

18 March.

I have forgotten the name of this station and the town beside it. It doesn't matter. Far more important is the fact that the Germans have left a huge store ~~mmmmmm~~ of fuel here. We stocked up on some yesterday. We intended to take some more today, but the captured materiel command of the front headquarters suddenly showed up. A "Kukuruznik" ~~mm~~ corn-cutter, from kukuruza, corn / ~~mmmmmm~~ (an U-2 plane) had flown in from God know's where. The aviation fuel is ordered to be saved ~~for~~ <sup>out</sup> the planes.

To save/at least a little of the gasoline for ourselves, the former "owners" ~~mm~~ resorted to trickery: they mined /zaminirovali/ ~~mm~~ a few hundred drums which had been scattered outside the limits of the storage place.

. . .

31 March. Volochiysk. Evening.

The ice has broken. Today we laid down an artillery barrage, after which the infantry, meeting no opposition, moved forward.

We are moving toward Tarnopol.

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## CHAPTER VIII

## THE BATTLE FOR TARNOPOL

23 March. ~~Bel'ke~~ Bel'ke Borke.

/Unsuccessful attempts to advance at Tarnopol./

2 April 1944.

Today we moved to Rakovets. The men are exhausted by mud and bad weather. . .

3 April. Rakovets

Events of the day made <sup>risky the</sup> crossing . . of <sup>"Devils' Bridge", as we called</sup> the bridge across the <sup>river (rechka)</sup> stream at Rakovets. Like most of the local bridges it is made of poles and is narrow and primitive, intended for horses ~~and wagon~~ and wagons. It creaked and groaned under the weight of the overloaded Studebaker and the gun. The men ~~had to~~ get off the truck during the crossing.

4 April.

This is crazy weather. Mud and a snowstorm. We "travelled" all night and <sup>after</sup> ~~for~~ ten hours of superhuman effort <sup>had</sup> moved five kilometers. <sup>pulled</sup> The men ~~hauled~~ the trucks and guns with straps. . .

The night of the 7th and 8th of April. Rogalikha.

/ A peasant hut <sup>c</sup>onverted into a regimental command post. Describes the weary men and officers sprawled around. ~~"I should like to have my rifle with me, but I have none."~~ The telephone keeps ringing: batteries request ammunition and gasoline. . . Trucks sent for these have not been heard from. They are probably stuck in the mud./

8 April. Semikovtsy.

The enemy is pressing on us with tanks and <sup>planes.</sup> ~~planes.~~ We couldn't hold out in Rogalikha. We are in no position to fight; we haven't a single shell or liter of gasoline. The ~~problem~~ task now is to save our materiel. Today, thanks to the self-reliance of the men, we were able to extricate four guns and two Studebakers from the mud. 20 men moved ~~one~~ one gun; 50 to 60 men pushed a truck.

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10 April. Bovaruvka farm.

A Studebaker finally arrived with ammunition and a drum of gasoline. Our retreating sappers blew up "Devils' Bridge", and two of our Studebakers are still on the ~~main~~ other side. An anti-tank regiment, newly arrived here, is ~~all~~ left on the other side of the river, also stuck without ~~gasoline~~ shells or fuel.

14 April. The same place.

The enemy is attacking to the right of us. I hear <sup>5</sup> that ~~that~~ they forced the stream and are moving toward a junction with the remains of the Tarnopol garrison. However, the neighboring IPTAP (~~antitank~~ (anti-tank regiment) succeeded in restoring "Devils' Bridge" and getting out the three trucks left on the other side. We saved ours also.

15 April. Bobaruvka

Our new heavy tanks have arrived. They are called "IS" (Iosif Stalin), but in official documents are named Kv-121. They have a muzzle brake on the gun similar to the German "Tigers" and from a distance resemble the "Tigers" very much. Our tank men lost no time in taking advantage of this fact to play a joke on the Fritzes. They headed for the flank of the enemy at full speed. The latter took them for their own tanks and offered no resistance to their approach. ~~These~~ These daring men destroyed several "Tigers" without suffering any losses and took a company of prisoners.

...

18 April. The same place.

Tarnopol' at last has been taken. We didn't take a single prisoner; we shot them all. We are cruel men.

19 April 1944. Bel'ke Borke.

An ordnance repair ~~reg~~ (artmasterskaya) regiment has been ~~stationed~~ ~~here~~ stationed here. They ~~have~~ have repaired all the guns which were out of order. They get spare parts by ~~cannibalizing~~ cannibalizing Soviet self-propelled mounts (SU).

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~~20 April. Bovaruvka.~~

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20 April. Evening. Bovaruvka.

On a trip from the rear to the command post the jeep had a flat tire. There was no spare, and the driver ~~man~~ couldn't patch the inner tube--the captured "ersatz" material he used wouldn't stick. But "Russian ~~man~~ ingenuity found a solution". He ~~man~~ rolled up a quilt and inserted it in the casing instead of the inner tube, and on this they ran 20 kilometers. /

22 April. Bovaruvka.

Night. I can't sleep. Today I went to the forward gun of the 2nd Battery. I had a bad intention in doing so: to have a sniper fire on me. I wanted to make sure that I would be wounded. I don't want to die, but I can't stand existing conditions any longer.

What is the reason for my pessimism? Am I a weak-willed, capricious man, unable to submit to circumstances? It nauseates me to go ~~to~~ to the command post; everything irritates me; I don't know what to do with my time; I don't want to do anything, and nothing interests me. ~~And I wish I'd never see that~~ And I wish I'd never see that Kovalenko, with his ostentatious bravery, his nagging over every little detail. I can't stand his efforts to ~~distinguish~~ distinguish himself in the eyes of the command.

I realize more and more clearly that there is arising in the depths of my soul a feeling of hostility to my environment. This feeling is not yet clear; it is covered with a mist and has not yet taken form. But it exists, and the time will come when the mist will disappear and the feeling will come out in the open. I have a presentiment of this.  
 50X1-HUM  
 I believe it.

23 April. En route from the batteries to the command post.

trip before darkness   
 subjected him to enemy sniper fire. He remarks how, in spite of his desire to be wounded, the instinct of self-preservation made him take measure every ~~man~~ to save himself.

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24 April. Evening. At the command post.

. . . At the command post I found ~~N~~ Kovalenko. With unconcealed pleasure, and in a solemn tone, he announced: "You have been ordered to the <sup>HQ</sup> ~~front~~ of the front." . . .

25 April. Bovaruvka.

Now, after two years of service, I am leaving the regiment to which I have become so attached. During this time the regiment has taken part in dozens of major battles and hundreds of minor skirmishes; has lost 560 men killed and thousands wounded. Eight times it was "destroyed" (was routed in encirclements or in battles with tanks); 12 times it was reformed right at the front. To its credit are 404 knocked-out or burned enemy tanks. ~~It~~ <sup>It</sup> itself lost 127 guns. There has been a hundred per cent turnover in the personnel of the regiment. Of the former Ural officers, only Captain Lisovskiy, Lieut. Ivanchenko, and I remain alive. The last Ural officer, Gurin, was recently wounded.

30 April.

The last three days I have spent in "battles" with the internal <sup>One can fight off</sup> "enemy," a worse enemy than the foreign one. ~~The~~ <sup>The</sup> foreign enemy; I can stand against him at the head of armed men. The internal enemy is more frightful: I am his prisoner and unarmed. He is master over me, and may judge me and punish me. And he has his own particular logic - he judges not according to the offense, but because he needs ~~man~~ victims. He may even show mercy, but not according to what ~~what~~ one deserves, but because he is satiated with applying the lash.

Every day there are sessions of commissions and gangs of investigators on my case. Chief among them is Kovalenko. How mean he is and how he wants to crush me! You ask why? Isn't it because I tried to correct his gross mistake? ~~I~~ <sup>I</sup> I certainly never tried to do anything to lower his dignity as a commanding officer. The former brigade commander would ~~have~~ have paid no attention to what I did.

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Anyway, I ~~am stronger than they~~ stand firm against <sup>think</sup> Alone, I am stronger than they. They would like to devour me, but they won't be able to swallow me; I'll never go into the mouth of the beast in one piece. They gobbled up the commander of the 3rd Regiment at one gulp, but that won't work with me. They may cut me into pieces, but ~~adhere to me~~ I'll never give myself up to them alive and whole.

2 May. Meshkovitse, south of Tarnopol.

The rear of the regiment is located here. I am here en route to Front headquarters, to fill in forms for provisions and supplies. I have been ready to leave for two days, but sit waiting for a car. Kovalenko forbade giving me means of transport. He took my light car away from my successor for himself, saying to him: "You'll be just as well off without sitting in a foreign Willys." ~~any more off for not sitting in the foreign Willys~~

3 May. Myshkovitse /sic; ~~nam~~ cf. above/

All those who formerly called themselves my friends have turned *away* from me since my fall from grace. They behave as comically and stupidly as children. My "friend" Major N.I. has especially distinguished himself. He grovels before Kovalenko; he licks his hand like an ingratiating puppy and tries to build up his <sup>own</sup> low prestige at my expense. It's funny to ~~watch~~ watch him!

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CHAPTER ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~  
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In the Reserve

6 May. Klimkovtsy. Evening.

On 5 May I went from Meshkovtsy to Medyn' on a Studebaker travelling in that direction. From Medyn' I still had to go either to Toki or to Golotki, since the front headquarters were located in one of these villages.

"Turn around!" the <sup>girl</sup> regulating traffic at the crossroad KPP [pass-checking point] ordered the driver.

"There is no artillery headquarters here and no admittance for cars which do not belong here," said a lieutenant in charge of the KPP, when I insisted upon being allowed to pass. And we could not avoid having our documents checked.

"Go to Medyn'; there you may find out where the artillery is stationed," suggested the control-officer."

In Medyn' I found the political administration of the front, which also knew nothing the artillery's whereabouts. Disgusted with having been so unsuccessful for the whole day, I went to Volochaysk to spend the night. In the morning of 6 May I was back in Medyn' where fortunately I met at the KPP a truck going to the artillery HQ.

Colonel Kobylin, deputy chief of the OK (personnel section) treated me about as well as an inquisitor probably treated Galileo.

"In the hardship of the battle you gave orders to blow up the material and to retreat," shouted Kobylin, "Do you understand what you have ~~done~~? You permitted cowards to desert the battlefield. And in addition, you wasted gasoline and your rear establishments wasted sugar!" etc., etc.

Kobylin paid no attention to my excuses. I suppose that Vatutin, himself, (commanding the First Ukrainian Front) could not be more arrogant than this chamelion. The party commission of the front was supposed to examine my case today; however, for some reason the meeting was postponed until ~~the~~ 13 May.

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10 May. Same place.

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My feeling today was comparable to that of a sheep facing a pack of wolves in a thick forest. I felt hurt. Sometimes I even have doubts and wonder if I am not actually guilty. However, after a critical analysis of facts I feel certain that I am not.

11 May. Klimkovtsy, Evening.

At last I learned what the accusation is!

The most dreadful point is my "order" to blow up guns and retreat. In comparison all other points are unimportant, although a statement such as "ignores educational work" undermines the party standing of a communist.

I shall make a detailed record of that "fateful" day, because I want to make once more a critical analysis of what I had to go through.

The "misfortune" started on April 6, in Uvse. The regimental HQ and most of the batteries were stationed in Rogalikha, and south of that place; the 4th Battery was stationed in Uvse in the rear, behind the headquarters. The enemy's forces were considerably stronger than ours. In spite of the snowstorm, his aviation and tanks disturbed us day and night. During the night of the 6th, Germans apparently decided to encircle Rogalikha through Uvse and Malovody. Armed with automatic weapons and protected by tanks they started to draw close to the 4th Battery's positions. They attacked the regiment's HQ and the other batteries in Rogalikha, but fell under our heavy fire and were repelled. The situation was different in the 4th Battery. Its commander was scornful of machine guns which <sup>he</sup> considered "infantry weapons," and left them in the rear. He fought against automatic weapons with armor piercing shells. Very soon he remained without ammunition. Three times during the night he sent me an SOS: "Ammunition exhausted; no more gas; we are lost." I answered him with the stockphrase: "Hold out to the last man." At dawn he called me again after a long interruption in communications. I listened to his fearful complaint and suggested: "If you feel that in view of the situation it would be foolish to remain there, I authorize you to withdraw to a safer

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place. Remember, "I warned him, "do not leave guns or motor cars. Blow up or burn whatever you cannot take with you."

I gave this order with no feeling of panic. I simply wanted to prevent helpless men from being killed without necessity. I did not say "blow up and burn," because of pro-enemy feelings; on the contrary, I did not want them to seize our military equipment.

On the 14th Kovalenko came to Semikovtsy to "lead" the attack on our infantry. He had been with use twice before<sup>for</sup>/the same purpose. The first time his "leadership" proved to be rather successful: with a sub-machine gun and kicks he managed to chase the soldiers out of their trenches and to make them attack. Kovalenko rushed ahead first, the others followed. Although an orderly was wounded and three men killed, the battalion advanced 500 meters and occupied the German trenches. Kovalenko at that time left a good impression. The next day he reappeared in Semikhovtsy and was indignant at the battalion's having abandoned trenches they had occupied the day before, after the Germans counter-attacked. With pistol in hand he rushed to the infantrymen. He persuaded the battalion commander to repeat the attack, and promised that the battalion's advance would be supported by the fire of two artillery guns. Following his orders the artillery fired about 20 rounds, then the 2nd Battery moved two guns forward. They did not have time to open fire; German mortars rained shells on them and on the men attacking. The fire which followed forced the battalion to run back for cover. Four times Kovalenko tried to repeat the attack. Men rushed out of the trenches and were killed by mortar fire, but could not advance.

Kovalenko left; this time fortune had turned against him.

On the third day he came early, at daybreak.

The two guns had already been pulled out of the mud and sent for repair. After having praised me for my initiative, Kovalenko in an angry mood rushed to the infantry.

"Comrade Lieutenant Colonel, the regiment commander blamed me for

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yesterday's useless loss of men, and forbade local attacks. I cannot carry out your orders; call the commander of the regiment! Thus the battalion commander is said to have answered Kovalenko. Apparently Kovalenko called the commander of the rifle regiment who also refused to attack. I know that he came to our headquarters pale and upset, gave my driver hell "for not knowing how to salute," chased the administrative platoon commander out of the house, and roared <sup>at</sup> and insulted Major N. I., the chief of staff.

The "effence" of the chief of staff was so trivial (he made an error in the date of birth of a soldier, in a list for the distribution of socks), that no self-respecting officer should have become upset about it, the more so since N. I. was always accurate and precise.

"I order you to send him to be an ammunition handler (yashchichnyy) in a gun crew, and given me a written report of it in an hour," was Kovalenko's senseless order.

Very politely, with all the respect due to a superior officer I tried to intercede for my subordinate.

"So! you all gang together; you intercede for this loafer. Just wait; I'll break up this whole outfit!" Kovalenko shouted at me.

Svistil'nik, who happened to be there, added fuel to the fire:

"What are you wandering around here for?" the brigade commander asked him.

"I am relieved from duty, Comrade Lieutenant Colonel".

"What for?"

"I don't know myself, Comrade Lieutenant Colonel. I have fought well everywhere, but now in this regiment I have become useless." Maybe for the reason that I saved the equipment which the HQ ordered blown up."

"What!" yelled Kovalenko.

"Well, when we ran out of gas in Uvse, we were ordered to blow everything up."

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"Come with me!"

And the brigade commander took Svistil'nik in his Willys and without any parting greetings drove to his HQ.

A week later came the famous order relieving me from duty and putting me at the disposal of the Personnel Section(OK) of the Artillery Administration (Artupravleniye)

In their judgement I am obviously guilty, since the directions ("ustanovka") of the higher command and the propaganda requirement are contrary to common sense. Our commanders are ordered to "hold out to the last man" no matter how foolish this may be. Actually nobody ever held out "to the last." As soon as the situation becomes difficult, the infantry begins to "change" positions, the artillery to "maneuver," while in reports nobody has ever suffered defeats; all have only victories." For instance Uvse village was defended by the 2nd Infantry Battalion. On April 4th, as soon as German tanks were heard, the battalion retreated to the rear, to Malovody, while the commanding officer made an obviously false report:

"I am attacked by fifty enemy heavy tanks; 90 percent of the men are already lost. I still hold the positions."

"I still hold the positions" is the favorite and most common statement, while retreating. And the superior, more often than not, knows that his subordinate lies, but he pretends to believe, since he himself lies to his commander. Being a subordinate he cannot tell the truth: if he tells the truth, he will be hanged, but for his lies he is praised. Lying, because <sup>one's</sup> <sup>has</sup> for a moral necessity. The ability to lie well is considered among us as a special quality. Therefore the regiment commander was not surprised to receive wrong information from his battalion commander; on the contrary he himself went much farther in falsehood by reporting to the Division Commander:

"One hundred German tanks are attacking (now it is one hundred), thirteen attacks were repelled, thirty fascist tanks were destroyed, I am still putting up a stubborn resistance. No ammunition. Request reinforcement."

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Following is the Division Commander's answer:

"Do not ask for help, I don't have any. You are my reinforcements. If you don't have enough men use your resourcefulness; if you lack ammunition use bayonets; if the bayonet is broken use the Russian fist, but hold on and do not surrender to the enemy."

This<sup>is</sup>/a typical answer of every high officer. Such an answer has become the custom. We are idealists. Just admit that you are helpless and you will be considered as insecure. If you decide to retreat you will be branded as a coward and a traitor. This explains why Kovalenko accepted as true, Svistil'nik's "testimony" and "reacted" so quickly.

I have already learned that after the next battle Kovalenko had Svistil'nik court martialed for cowardice. In any case he still remains the slave of our customs. One must only regret that our "training" eliminates the possibility for a man to act according to his judgement and conscience.

12 May. Klimkovtsy. Evening.

I went to Medyn' to see the party investigator, (partsledovatel') and to write an explanation. The meeting of the party commission is scheduled for tomorrow at 1730. What will it say?

The party investigator, unlike Kobylin, behaved calmly and listened with attention to my explanations. I can not say that he was in a hurry, but neither did he prolong the conversation. He did not ask a single question on the substance of the matter, and did not reproach me at all. He gave me the brigade commander's report to read and told me to state in writing my explanations.

"State briefly what you admit and what you do not, at the party commission meeting tell only what you have stated in writing" he advised me. "Do you think I should send an investigation commission to the regiment?"

"No," I answered, without hesitating. I felt that this major was a just man and decided to trust him completely. I liked him. By the end of the conversation I formed the opinion that a continuous stream

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of innocent slandered people came here, and that the party chiefs understood it.

19 May.

The Party commission has examined my case. In the beginning it did not reach any conclusion. The accusation against me was not confirmed. The chairman was already calling the next case, when suddenly some major general called for the floor.

"What was this man called here for? "Why was he ordered to report here, if there is no evidence against him? Who <sup>is</sup> fooling whom here? The party commission cannot start being tolerant of those who violate party and military discipline. I see here the report of the brigade commander and a resolution of the artillery commander of the front stating: "to be discharged (otvezvat')". By not coming forth with a decision the party commission is opposing the brigade commander, although the Central Committee of our party requires that we support the commanders authority in every way."

There was lengthy discussion and a great deal of indecision, they finally arrived at the general opinion that it was not proper to bring before such a high party tribunal as the party commission of the front a perfectly innocent man. The judges felt somewhat embarrassed. After long consideration, they decided: "For weakening the party political and educational work during the last combat period, to be reprimanded."

This is the lightest sentence which is given in this tribunal.

My comrades in the reserve advised me to send a report to the chief of the Personnel Section, ~~requesting~~ requesting return to my former assignment.

Frankly, I myself do not want to go back there.

20 May. Kamenets - Podol'sk.

In the morning I went on a mission (komandirovka) detachment service in a motorcar, with other officers.

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27 May. Chernovitsa.

I am the chairman of one of the commissions for re-examining the UOR troops (UOR - Administration of Defense Works). The task of the committee consists in finding among the UOR personnel those suitable for combat service.

A hundred kilometers behind the front line the UOR keeps building fortification in case the enemy should counter-attack. They dig trenches, prepare artillery positions, build concrete pillboxes, etc. Wounded men who have been released from hospitals are also sent there for "complete recovery." I was provided with an NKO (People's Commissariat of Defense) order of 1942, with a description of ailments, with each description is an article or paragraph. If we discharge anybody, we must state on the basis of what article we do it. When we were detached for this "extremely important" service, we were warned in the headquarters of the front not to let ourselves be fooled by malingers and to select 17,000 "bayonets" to compensate for losses of combat units. There are 20 of us chairmen to one UOR. Each commission has three doctors: an eye specialist, surgeon, and a specialist for internal ailments. Doctors make statements from their own viewpoint, and in my capacity of politically trusted man and military commander I must make the final decision, paying almost no attention to doctors' conclusion; as to whether the given biped is to go to the meat grinder or not.

About a minute is spent for each man examined. The first question is asked by the eye specialist:

"Well, can you tell the difference between a fascist and a Russian?"

"Of course; that is easy."

"All right, fit for service."

Then comes the surgeon's "examination."

"Have you been wounded?"

"No."

"Have you been operated on?"

"No."

"Fit for service."

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Then the doctor for internal ailments listens to his heart

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And he starts complaining.

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"Fit for service," I note on the list, and call the next man.

Some resort to unexpected actions. One forty-five year old man came up to the desk out of turn and begged to be enrolled without a medical examination.

"The Germans mistreated and insulted my family, and I want revenge," he said. The doctors examined him and pronounced him fit. Suddenly he fell to the ground in convulsions, biting his lips and foaming at the mouth." "A paralytic [sic]" I thought. The doctors examined him again. Fit for service.

Men suffer from epilepsy, hernia, many have swollen legs, some are even blind and deaf. I seldom declare anybody unfit. I am bound by the instruction: seventeen thousand? I cannot return to Front HQ without them.

"How do you feel?"

"Bad, doctor"

"What is wrong?"

"I have a pain in my chest, I have heart palpitations and cannot walk. I still have rheumatisms from the first war."

"Make deep knee bends... the right ... the

heart, yes - , - but this is not dangerous. After the war you will be the first to be sent to a resort.

Fit for service."

I am the last to decide.

"Do you want to fight Hitler?" I ask, more as a formality, since I know the answer which will follow.

"Yes, of course" the man being examined hastens to say. "They killed my brother and I want to avenge him. However I have a pain here ----.

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28 May. Kitsman'

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My commission, paying no attention to complaints or convulsions, declared "fit for service" 1900 men out of 5000 examined. We felt that we have reached a record figure. However, it appeared that we were behind all the others and were reprimanded by the group leader. It appeared that all the others were much more successful than we were, my colleague, Major Kasovskiy found that 60 percent of the men were fit for service. He tried hard to please the command, he even was afraid of being accused of going too far. I am unable to be as zealous as Kasovskiy.

4 June. Evening

The UOR men have been examined, the assignment is finished. About 17,000 "bayonet bearers" were selected. Today we must complete the last formalities.

19 June. Klimkovtsy

Again the reserve. From morning to night nothing to do. It seems to me that they call officers to the reserve to make fools of them.

21 June. Klimkovtsy

The last two days I have spent in talks with my room-mate. We discussed philosophy, politics and living conditions. Incidentally, we have the same opinions. Heretofore I considered myself as a man with a critical attitude. Now I am convinced that my criticisms seem pale when compared to those of officers condemned to this place.

In combat units officers are reserved, seldom joke, and do not speak about anything not connected with military life. In a circle of comrades sharing their views they are transformed; they feel free and say exactly the contrary to what, when on duty, they tell their subordinates. If feelings of the Red Army were judged from conversations of officers of the reserve, it could be stated positively that it is composed of anti-Soviet officers only. I observe carefully and still did not find one reservist without anti-Soviet ideas. Naturally nobody is pro-German.

I go to pack my luggage. Tomorrow we move to another place.

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23 June. Li~~X~~ichantsy.

We have already had two days of idleness in a new place. It rains ceaselessly. I live in a little house on the high bank of a river. There are five of us officers here. There is no place to sleep in the house. We sleep in the haymow. We eat in the officers' mess. Once a week each officer has a duty assignment/: Senior officer, majors and above, ~~none~~ are on duty in the mess. Officers of lower rank stand guard at posts. Lieutenants and junior lieutenants do the ~~dirty~~ dirty work: they cut wood for the mess, make the fires, peel the potatoes, wash the dishes, sweep the floors, and are sent to bring the provisions. We get up at six~~minutes~~ o'clock and immediately assemble for calisthenics, which are attended by about 20% of the officers.

They introduced the system of having somebody come around and wake us up. For two days attendance at calisthenics was 100%. On the third day attendance fell off sharply; officers began to hide in the hay to escape the wakers-up. After that those who hid and those who were "ill" increased steadily, and now the attendance at calisthenics has dropped to its usual percentage.

are sent  
 Every day we ~~sent~~ out for training. The ~~program of~~ program of military exercises is taken from the course for recruits (molodyye krasno-armeytsy). Officers either fail to show up at all for the exercises, or, headed by the instructors, hide somewhere ~~beyond~~ out of the town and play cards. All reservists are eager to take part in "tactical field exercises", since on these occasions they can go out in formation to the orchards and pick cherries.

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27 July. Yezerna

Not long ago this was the most advanced position of the defence. This is where our troops started their new advance, the first advance of the First Ukrainian Front in which I am not participating, I feel a little sorry, but nothing can be done.

Yezerna is destroyed, there are only a few people, left; they look like beggars ...

!!!!

29 July. Khaluyev.

Today our troops have taken L'vov.

Often, inactivity, I talk with local peasants. They are not communicative or frank and are frightened, but when they realize that I do not conceal my opinions they gain courage and state their unwillingness to be under the Soviet regime. They consider the Germans withdrawal as perfectly natural and are glad to be rid of them. But they are terribly afraid that the Red Army will collectivize their farms.

....

1 August. Nemiluyev village

I have resolved to take any kind of duty, if only to get out of loafing around any more in this damned reserve.

2 August. Srudopol'tsy village

I was called there by the authorities for another "periodic talk". They promise to send me on duty, however, they "just cannot find" a vacancy in the anti-tank regiments.

6 August. Lyubochev in Poland.

Further complaints of idleness.

"I have read four comedies of Shakespeare, and am now reading Victor Hugo's "Les Miserable." A remarkable book!"

17 August. Tchebus'.

We have crossed the San river. I arrived at Tshebus' yesterday. With great difficulty I was able to buy 10 eggs and a piece of bread for

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The Poles are polite and talk to us; however, they do not like us. In contrast to the Galicians they are not afraid, but what pride and contempt is in their eyes!

27 August. Tarmnobzhok.

I spent the night in the house of a Polish man. I met him near the officer's mess, selling apples and pears. He readily permitted me to spend the night in his place. During the whole evening he spoke about our army, our regime and our people. What he despises the most is the kolkhoz system. He considers that our soldiers are a mass of people without culture and discipline. He was also surprised that when officers waved their hands asking for a ride drivers passed by although their cars were empty.

No matter how bad was his opinion about us, he was a good man and I warmly thanked him for room and hospitality. At nine o'clock I left from Demba, going to Tarmnobzhok.

....

In the mess, the waitress refused to serve a lieutenant-colonel because he did not belong to the Thirteenth Army. The lieutenant-colonel "raised hell". The mess officer came to find out what the noise was about, he looked at the ration certificate and also refused service. The angered lieutenant-colonel banged his fist on the table, and said:

"Can you not see that I am also a Soviet man fighting on the front. Do you not trust me for one dinner?"

The mess officer was hardly through talking with the lieutenant-colonel, when two lieutenants came and told him that their certificates were lost.

"Better shout or insist; food supplies are given to me according to the number of certificates, and I cannot feed one extra man," said the captain and left. The lieutenants went to trade shoes for food.

30 August. Bukovo.

Last night in the dark, hungry and tired, I strolled to this village through sands and fields. Yesterday I suffered everything: hunger and

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insult and the hardship of a thirty kilometer march on foot. I am grateful to a hospitable Pole: he kept me for supper last night, and in the morning gave me some milk and bread. Sedov, by some miracle, got <sup>f</sup>give eggs and we were able to have lunch. I feel the burden of this life. Possibly, the same burden is felt by other officers. But what is the answer? <sup>W</sup>Where is a better life? Every day I see the same thing, some officers can bear it no longer and start to drink or <sup>c</sup>commit crimes. Sometimes I feel that my patience is exhausted, I want to make a decision, to run away somewhere. But I lack the willpower.

14 September, Bukovo village.

I must write this down: now I occupy a "high" position - I was appointed chief of the reserve. How did I deserve such a promotion?

1 October. Bukovo village.

... I am billeted with two lieutenant colonels; Petr Mstinovich Pereguda, Hero of the Soviet Union, and Vasilii Ivanovich Panteleyev. Panteleyev has just arrived from a disciplinary battalion, having been sentenced to "expiate with blood his guilt before the father land." Sometimes lieutenant-colonel Baklazhanov - an "over-faithful" party member - drops in.

4 October. The same place.

This week, too, I spent in a bad mood. Mental suffering and humiliations have infected my spirit like poison. Peregruda is right in calling life in the reserve a period of "healing by mud" (gryazelecheniye) "In a health resort," he says, "they cure ailments of the body with salt mud. Here they pour mud on military personnel in the hope of curing them of their spiritual 'ailments'".

11 October. Zgorsko farm

I have just returned from my Polish neighbours. A retired teacher, Pan (Mr.) Genrikh lives with them. We became good friends. He is one hundred percent Polish, extremely chauvinistic and patriotic....

Like most of the elderly Poles, Genrikh knows Russian perfectly.

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He recalls favorably the period of the Tsarist regime, but openly expresses his scorn for the present Communist order. He considers himself as being an enemy of the two worst foes of the Polish people: the German fascists and the Russian communists.....

15 October. Zgursko farm

At last Vasiliiy Ivanovich has told us about his experience in the disciplinary battalion. He always refused to answer our questions, because of the promise he signed when he was released, or for some other reason. Today he told us all about the "front line house of correction" for officers.

"I commanded a rifle regiment of the 181st Division. My regiment was in defensive positions in Broda. Two companies of "westerners" were sent to us as replacements. Following the orders of the division commander I assigned the two companies to the same battalion. As usual there was no equipment or food for the men, and at the first opportunity the two companies surrendered to the enemy. For this reason the division commander had the battalion commander and me courtmartialed. We were sentenced to six months in a disciplinary battalion and deprived of all decorations and rank.

As privates, under guard of men armed with submachine guns were ordered to occupy a village which it had been impossible to take either with the help of tanks or artillery. The first attack was unsuccessful and out of a hundred men forty came back. Obviously there were wounded men among those remaining on the battlefield, but in disciplinary battalions wounded are not picked up. My battalion commander and my new friend, Lt. Col. Krasikov, who was sentenced for having been surrounded and for losing all his equipment, were both killed in the first battle. I was slightly wounded in the second battle, but I remained in the ranks. That time we blew up the attacking German tanks. My old friend Major Selivanov, an artillery man, was killed in the battle. He was sent to the disciplinary battalion for overexpenditure of fuel".

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"Were you in battle twice?" asked Pereguda.

"No; three times. In general each disciplinary battalion man must take part in three military actions; then he can apply for being freed before his time is served, i.e., after three months instead of six.

"How many men were sent to the battalion with you?" I asked.

"Two hundred colonels, lieutenant-colonels, and majors.

"How many were freed with you?"

"Our company happened to be the luckiest. It participated in eight successful operations and was authorized to restore to their rights all those who remained alive, i.e., twenty men.

"Then two hundred of you started out and twenty came back?" asked Pereguda.

"That's right."

"And where are the remaining hundred and eighty men, or ninety percent?"

"They were killed during the operations. I repeat that were comparatively lucky; as a rule only three to five percent return."

"Who commands the battalion?"

"An ordinary captain. The company commander is a lieutenant and a platoon commander is a junior lieutenant. And they are all more arrogant than any general. And why should they not be arrogant? For instance, a colonel serves as orderly to a platoon commander, shines his shoes, washes his laundry, and cooks and serves his dinner. Don't laugh," warned Vasilii Ivanovich, "every disciplinary battalion man would gladly become an orderly. If the platoon commander is satisfied your life and liberation ahead of time are guaranteed. Neither the platoon nor the company commander participate in the attacks, much less the battalion commander. They are all carried out by the disciplinary battalion men and the section (otdeleniye) commanders selected from among them.

"Is that true that disciplinary battalion commanders live like kings?" asked Pereguda.

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"They live just like generals. They are dressed and live better than any division commander. I had excellent cloth for a uniform and overcoat. I had to present it to the platoon commander. I gave my gold watch which I brought from home to the company commander. Some tried to keep valuable things they had, and paid for it with their lives."

"How were you fed?" said I.

"Not at all. The fact of the matter is that no food whatsoever is provided. If you are hungry you must advance and take enemy supplies. For this reason men with sub-machine guns guard disciplinary battalions when they are moving, in order to prevent them from leaving the ranks and getting food supplies. A disciplinary battalion, brother, is not a health resort. You can not put on weight."

"When were you reinstated as lieutenant-colonel?" asked Pereguda.

"I was told to report here, to the personnel section, had three decorations returned, and was reinstated. Now they promise to appoint me for three months as deputy regiment commander. Then, the personnel section promised to give me a regiment."

"Were you expelled from the party?"

"No, they did not have time. They took my party card, but did not expel me officially. They promise to return the card when I am restored to my previous duty."

"The clothes you wear now - were they issued after your release from the battalion?" said I, At that moment our common "friend," Baklazhanov, approached us.

"Sen'ka (the orderly) gave me his clothes; he had heard that I had returned and came to see me.

"Well, how are you getting along?" Vasilii Ivanovich asked, addressing Baklazhanov in order to stop the conversation quickly.

I wanted to ask Panteleyev before what tribunal he was tried, but he did not let me speak:

We'll finish our chatter later, Major. Don't you see that serious guests have arrived?

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21 October. ~~M~~ Novo-Ves'.

~~We~~ We arrived here yesterday. Our accommodations are very poor. There are six of us in a tiny room: besides me, two majors, a captain, and two junior lieutenants. They all had to sleep on the floor, on straw. Because of my ranking position I got certain privileges: they gave me a sheet and a pillow case and the owner's bed. ~~M~~ Hay stuffed into the case serves as a pillow. . . Our ~~M~~ "host"--the commander of the combined-arms (obshchovyskiy) reserve--despises the artillery-men and tries to show his contempt in the assignment of <sup>huts.</sup> ~~huts.~~ For example, in the ~~niegh~~ neighboring hut there is not even a floor, and there is only one tiny window . . . Worst of all, they haven't even moved out seven sick ~~P~~ Poles from the hut yet.

22. October.

Lieutenant Kazarinov came today to congratulate us on our new quarters. / He made mocking comments about the splendor of their "manure pit" as evidence of the concern for them of "the greatest military leaders of our time, the victorious Russian officer class ended with: "Comrades, we (ofitserstvo)", and ~~said~~ ~~we~~ shall show our appreciation of this attention shown us by great heroism in the future battles."/

25 October. Novo-Ves' village.

They say there never was a mission that Sarayev couldn't carry out.

This is just what happened on this occasion: two regiment commanders of the 181st Division had failed; they could not get a prisoner ("yazyk" - a tongue) from whom to get military information, but Sarayev accomplished "the impossible."

In three months on the defensive no prisoner could be taken in all the Thirteenth Army's sector. The Army commander requested from division commanders "a prisoner at any price." Dozens of <sup>R</sup>ussian soldiers were killed but no prisoner was available for information about the enemy.

"Well, my friend, the whole Army depends on you; don't let us down"

~~said the division~~

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said the division commander to Col. Sarayev.

"What do you mean, General; when did Sarayev ever let anybody down?" replied the latter.

The storm battalion of Sarayev's regiment worked all night but got no prisoners and had their own men taken prisoners.

Sarayev was not worried.

At six o'clock he called the general, who told him to come and report.

Sarayev reported to the division commander with a prisoner. An interpreter was called. The Fritz was a genuine German. He was even better than expected: he knew exactly the disposition of German troops on the whole sector of the front. Moreover, the information he provided corroborated entirely our intelligence reports. Sarayev was commended by the division commander.

About a week later the German somehow managed to get caught by the "Smersh" agents and "talked." Everything was perfect; he was a genuine Prussian, a pfc, and was taken prisoner on the spot by Sarayev's men. However, he had already been a prisoner for three months and because of manpower shortage was used as stable help in Sarayev's regiment. When prisoners became hard to get, Sarayev remembered this captive Fritz, told him how to behave and what to say, and produced him to the authorities.

I heard today the story about Sarayev's prisoner and decided to write it down.

26 October. Novo-Ves' village

Yesterday I went to Klementuovo to see commandant (Komendant) Savva. He invited me to stay for dinner. We drank glasses of alcohol and ate honey and jam. I fell asleep and slept in his place until nine p.m.. I asked this former fellow officer what were his duties as commandant. This is what he told me:

"I make searches and help regiment supply officers 'to pump out' food supplies. For this purpose I was assigned to organize an 'aktiv' composed of local collaborators (prodazhnnyye elementy) through which I uncover food

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and cattle hidden by the Poles. The same 'aktiv' is used by the 'Smersh' to seize the anti-Soviet elements. Besides the military commandant there is a civilian mayor of the village, just as there used to be. However, a reliable person is selected to carry out these functions, some poor, down-trodden, illiterate person, who knows nothing about politics, lacks of experience and is always subservient.

According to Savva, seventeen Poles were arrested last week in a village called Navoditsa, seven of whom were shot. "Smersh" operates as it does at home: during the night, unexpectedly, without notifying relatives of the reason for the arrest. Arrested men are not sent to prison; they are shot at once, or if they manage to get out of the scrape they are "given the honor" of being inducted into the Polish army.

An arrested man is told by the investigating officer: "The Red Army is liberating the Polish people from German invaders and is establishing an independent, democratic Poland. Do you want to enter the ranks of fighters for a free Poland, or are you satisfied with German brigandage and do you refuse now to stand against the fascists?" It is better not to hesitate. Those who are physically unfit for the Army are sent to labor camps to the Urals and Siberia.

3 November. Nova-Ves'

Today two officers are here waiting for a certificate to get money. -- money, money, money! -- recently this has been getting me down. Where I eat we have the same porridge three times a day. It is boiled with water, without fats and tastes awful. In the morning and in the evening a liquid called "tea" is served with a small lump of sugar and a small piece of dry rye bread. To buy from the Poles is more expensive every day.

4 November. Nova Ves'

Yesterday I went to a Polish church during mass. Sometimes I read with interest Polish prayer books. We are accustomed to consider religion in the light of atheistic teachings. Our propaganda tries to present religion as a narcotic, etc. However, here in Poland where religion is free, I am

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becoming convinced that what priests preach is not opium for people, but the most elementary human moral standards.

5 November. Zgursko.

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Major Chernov, an excellent officer, applied for a furlough in order to take care of his childredn. He just had a letter that his wife died and his two small daughters, seven and five years old, were not being cared for.....

The answer was:

"..... You consider your own interests as more important than those of the party.... We need officers.... Write to the local military commissariat (voyenkomat); it will instruct whom it may concern to take care of your children. Go away and never reappear with such an application.

6 November. Nova Ves'.

[Training under actual battle conditions. Orders are to aim higher than the troops "attacking." The results: day before yesterday - three wounded; yesterday - five wounded, one killed.]

9 November. Nova Ves'.

Two days of celebration.

On the seventh an intoxicated lieutenant killed a man from the supply section, on the eighth two captains fought each other, the same day a lieutenant gave a beating to an infantry major, during the night of the sixth somebody broke the door and looted clothes from the warehouse, the apartment of the quartermaster depot chief was also pillage. There is scarcely a house where something did not happen: one had a pair of shoes stolen, another a jacket, or an overcoat. I am not speaking about losses of the civilian population. All the loot is traded for home distilled alcohol.

14 November.

I have just been for my regular friendly talk with the commander. After an hour of "talk," he, probably tired after the long "lecture" he had given me,

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changed to a "friendly" tone and began to talk as if he had a sincere feeling of respect for me. In parting he promised to show me indulgence and to send me at last to a unit. He "sincerely" asked me to remember the offenses enumerated against me, and not to be offended if he assigned me duty of a lower rank.

"The weakening of the party political work" he said, "is a great error for a leader. Such errors are severely punished; you were lucky to get off so lightly."

When I left I was a nervous wreck.....

..... I write and look around in order not to be seen sitting on a hill and writing by an "super-vigilant" patrol from the army headquarters. They would think that I was a spy.

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CHAPTER X

The Sandomir Bridgehead

(Bridgehead on the Nisla River in the Sandomir region)

20 November. Ivaniska.

--- I am at the front again ---

--- As I should have expected I have received a lower assignment.

I have been attached to an infantry division as commander of an OIPTD (otdel'nyy protivotankovy istrebitel'nyy division) [detached anti-tank battalion]. I am glad to be out of the reserve.

24 November. Stobets.

Today commander of the 102nd Rifle Corps held a conference of the unit commanders ..... [Due to trouble with my car] I arrived late. Corps HQ personnel seemed to have gone crazy over "supervigilance". I showed them my documents and reported that I had been called to the conference, but no one would even tell me the place, "classified secret" (zasekrechennoye), of the meeting. With difficulty I persuaded the captain who was duty officer at least to help me find out to whom I was to report. For a whole hour he telephoned, sent messengers and even went somewhere himself. Finally he said: "Yes, you are ordered to the conference, but you have arrived late, and the general has forbidden the admission of late arrivals. Wait for an intermission; then you will probably be admitted."

It was two hours before there was a break. Then the doors of the peasant's hut, which was surrounded by a platoon of submachine gunners, were opened, and the officers began to come out . . . "It's all over," said a friend of mine, a colonel. "We've been meeting for eight hours, and I'm hungry as a wolf!" . . . However, the unit commanders were asked to remain; the corps CO had something to say to them separately.

[redacted] 50X1-HUM  
there was considerable confusion. The corps CO, a lieutenant-general, (elsewhere called a colonel-general) was talking to the CO of the "chetverka" about greater efforts to take prisoners. ("Chetverka," meaning a group of four, the four of a suit of

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cards, a four-horse team, etc., "pyaterka," a similar term for a group of five, and presumably the other collective numerals, were used as code names for regiments.) The regiment CO asked the general how he could expect scouts to go out to get prisoners when their boots and clothing were all worn out.

This started a disorderly chorus of complaints about lack of clothing and food from the unit commanders, among them the mustached Major-General Krasnov, CO of the 172nd Division

"I don't understand!" said the corps CO "Commander of the rear services, have you misinformed me? According to you we recently received a thousand pairs of boots and distributed them to the units."

"Comrade general," said the latter, "do not listen to the unit commanders. They think that somebody has to take care of them. They have a special staff and transportation for their own supply. They do not utilize local resources and expect hand-outs from higher echelons. They have everything."

. . . The unit commanders protested all at the same . . .

"Stop yelling," indignantly shouted the Chief of the Political Section. "Comrade General, the Party and the Government made these men regiment leaders; they entrusted to them the lives of hundreds and thousands men; the People's Commissar provided them with special staffs for supplies, and instead of being grateful to the fatherland for having trusted them, instead of displaying a maximum of the commander's care for his subordinates, these commanders make a market place out of the corps commander's meeting."

"This won't do; this won't do" said the Commander of the rear, you and I will have to figure this out, General. Division commanders, I beg you to help me. Since we have had a very long meeting today, we shall adjourn, I suggest that everybody return to his post."

The corps commander closed the meeting. Indignant and dissatisfied, grumbling or discussing their troubles, the unit commanders began to leave. 28 November. A house between Stobtse and Yanchitse.

. . . It is getting colder. I hope real frost will come soon, with less mud. Men would suffer less from worn out shoes.

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. . . The division commander ordered the posting of guards with machine guns to prevent "westerners" from deserting. I went to the batteries and checked that his order was carried . . . "Westerners" are men recently mobilized in Western Ukraine. There are very few in the artillery. They are not trusted with guns. The poor "Queen of Battles" [Infantry] is full

~~The poor "Queen of Battles" with guns~~  
of westerners. They were mobilized as Soviet citizens. While being trained their shoes wore out, and afterwards nothing was issued from the army. . . Moreover they are starving like the other soldiers. We Russians have now gotten used to it and suffer without protesting, but the Galicians do not. A Westerner posted on guard - an hour later there is nobody there; he has disappeared. He is sent on front line patrol -- and goes over to the Germans. In the beginning whole companies of Westerners were created, and whole companies surrendered. Now they are distributed throughout the whole mass of troops. At the beginning two "old" Red Army men were attached to a Westerner, required to watch him day and night and be responsible for him. Deserting did not stop. Now they have obliged us, the artillery men to stop the Westerners. On the whole front line we were ordered to place sentries between batteries and prevent anybody from going to the rear during the night. -----

29 November. Stobets. Evening

----- My duty is "to kill the German". Personally I am disgusted with such a "job". Commanders and soldiers are often proud of having on the "war record" a number of Germans killed. Officers are commending such "highly efficient" soldiers . . . . I am happy that my hands are not bloodstained. At the same time I am a sincere patriot, and I hope that we are victorious and the Germans beaten. Thus there has developed in me a sort of dual mentality.

30 November. Yanchitiy village.

Yesterday, I attended a conference called by the division commander. Although the subject of the meeting did not concern us, the artillery men, nevertheless I was interested in hearing about the life of the infantry.

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Frankly, there is nothing in it to envy. Artillery men complain about shortages of fuel, ammunition and equipment, and the food situation is often difficult. However, in comparison with the infantry we enjoy real opulence. Our soldiers, when they find food supplies, load up the trucks, often throwing ammunition away. What can an infantry man take? He must carry a rifle, cartridges and <sup>^</sup>gr<sup>ew</sup>andes; he cannot be without his overcoat, mess pan, towel and underwear. Even a spoon is heavy after a walk of fifteen miles. How much food can <sup>h</sup>he carry? A couple of days supply. It would be fine if he could keep going and find places rich in food every two days. Unfortunately the infantry has been here for months already, close to the enemy trenches and there is no place to get food. They had had some luck in that their trenches crossed a potato field. But the supply is exhausted. We, the artillerymen can "maneuver", i.e., we can secretly send a truck to the rear (secretly because there is no gasoline allocation for travel not connected with military operations); we can send special foraging parties to the surrounding villages; or we can stock up on supplies where we find them, leave them far in the rear and return to get them later. Without motor transport the infantry can do none of this. . . . .

The press is praising our men; it extolls their achievements. But our men are above praise. They have sacrificed everything for victory: their lives, their health, their comfort, their peace of mind. Silently they suffer hunger and cold, destitution and moral degradation. They even sacrifice their honor; they rob the Poles of hay, steal from the gardens, or drive off the cattle of the inhabitants. And everywhere they pay with the priceless pearl of honor.

6 December. Yanchitsa.

. . . Many soldiers have no shoes at all; their feet are wrapped in rags. The commanding officer of the "Vos'merka" [collective form of "8"; cf. p<sup>93-4</sup> made a discovery: shoes in good condition are worn in turns.

For instance, a section goes to the trenches and wears shoes; when it comes back it takes these shoes off and gives them to those whose turn it is to

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go to the trenches next. The "experiment" was approved by the division commanders, and units are ordered to apply this method.

Sergeants in our batteries made their own "discovery" which consists in making shoes from shelter-tents, using tires for soles. Talking of tires, Konev ordered that three thousand old tires be distributed to the troops and used for shoe repairs as a replacement for leather.

7 December. Same Place.

I was still in bed when the battalion supply officer, lieutenant Sergeyenko, reported: "Major, we could not find potatoes in the Polish villages; the meat supply is exhausted; there is nothing with which to cook dinner for headquarters today. I visited all the villages in the neighborhood; there

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 is not a single head of cattle. The ~~infantry~~ has pillaged and eaten everything."

I felt like bawling out the lieutenant, and calling him lazy and incompetent, but what was the use? If this ~~lazy omnipresent~~ ubiquitous and unscrupulous robber confessed himself unable to do anything, that really meant things were hopeless.

. . . I really don't know what to do. Every day it is the same: no food for the horses, no clothes for the men, nothing to eat. It is no use to turn to the division commander. He knows the situation better than I, as do the commanders of the ~~front~~ army and the front. My petition would only meet with the answer given a hundred times before: "The Fatherland depends on you officers. ." etc. Trying to overcome the difficulties by our own efforts has reached the point where the Poles regard us as unfortunate, unwilling robbers. . . ~~Hammerhead~~ Up to the present time I have forbidden my men to rob. But from now on any such prohibition would have no effect.

. . . ~~Hammerhead~~ To carry out <sup>0</sup>your duties in any way that will keep your superior officers satisfied is not a very noble way to act, and besides it has its dangers: you rob today for the sake of your superior officers, and tomorrow, to keep their conscience clear, they put the blame on you.

12 December.

. . . Today two more "westerners" went over to the Germans. What will happen to the commander of the "Pyaterka". Poor fellow, he has no luck these days. They will probably remove him from command. ~~Hammerhead~~ Pukhov removed two regimental commanders and the division commander in the 181st Division for "failing to ~~provide~~ carry out party-political work among the new reinforcements". These "reinforcements" run away one after another. There is not a day but what some division carries out an exemplary court martial for deserters. As a rule the captured deserters are shot. Unlucky 102nd Corps! Can there be such a lack of food and clothing everywhere?

Today came the regular order from Konev, reprimanding the commanders of several units for lack of ~~activity~~ intelligence in "utilizing local resources to organize supply for the troops".

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23 December. Frisherka farm. 6 km west of Rakuv.

On the 21st we were transferred here to participate in major operations, preparations for which are being made.

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1 January 1945. Frisherka

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. . . Last night we welcomed in the new year with drinking and singing till two o'clock in the morning. It was not especially enjoyable, of course, as there was no music and no women. . . .

Getting ready for big operations, we are undergoing training in the combined operations of infantry and tanks under attack of ~~many~~ reinforced enemy forces. Our poor barefoot infantry is attacked by our own tanks, that is, they are ~~training~~ being trained not to fear the enemy tanks, but, sacrificing themselves, to destroy them. In accordance with the orders of the command, the training is as close to actual combat conditions as possible. The tank, firing live ammunition from its machine guns and cannon, approaches the positions of the ~~battalion~~ battalion undergoing training and runs over its anti-tank pits and trenches and the men in them. The latter, for their part, hurl live grenades at the tank, but of course, at such a distance that they don't hit the tank. During the first day of training two "westerners" in the division were killed and several Siberians wounded. In the ~~neighborhood~~ neighboring 8th Corps, seven men were wounded in one day of training.

7 January.

I have suddenly "discovered America". I have discovered the idea <sup>of</sup> bak of keeping these notes--to describe the facts of life in combat.

~~have been forbidden to publish~~ would  
~~have been forbidden to publish~~ I knew in advance that our journals ~~will~~ not publish these notes.

The editor would say: "My friend, you are lacking in bolshevist ideological purposefulness".

After all, not every work is published. Let my notes remain just for me myself. If I am alive after the war I can read them and recall the past.

Of course, when it comes to descriptions of conditions at the front, nobody can write more sensationally than Il'ya Erenburg or lie more than Simonov, describing his "heroes of Stalingrad". During the whole war I have never met one man on the front who displayed such

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do  
 heroism as ~~and~~ the "heroes" in the articles of Simonov. Of course there are heroes--90% of the men in the Red Army deserve to be called heroes, but what kind of heroes? Certainly nothing like those described by Simonov and Erenburg. Here are some examples:

Simonov's hero is fearless; danger is nothing to him. But a hero who is an ordinary mortal fears danger and never runs to meet it. Simonov's hero, sent into battle, shouts of devotion to the ~~party~~ cause of the party and to the Soviet government and goes to his death for that cause./The real hero has long ago given up (otrebsya) his faith in the cause of the party; he goes into battle without a burning desire to perform great deeds and without inspiration; he goes out of necessity, just as an honorable man, conscious of his duty, goes to a difficult task. He goes in the hope of carrying out his duty and of surviving.

Simonov's hero is always full of initiative and ~~manly~~ invariably crafty ~~clever~~ and resourceful. He looks for an encounter with the enemy and with danger. The real hero is the opposite of him: he is without initiative, he does not look for danger, he engages the enemy as ~~required~~ required by circumstances, he is not resourceful, ~~on~~ crafty or capable of stratagems; he ~~rather~~ trusts more to chance, and ~~does not~~ fights the enemy fairly /po chestnomu - i.e., without resorting to tricks/.

Simonov's hero is always in the lead, always rises first to the attack, takes the place of his fallen commander, and "destroys" cowards spread and those who ~~panic~~ panic. The real hero ~~in~~ does not seek a great place for himself, and does not lead a battalion into battle; he does not shoot his weaker comrades, and in a difficult situation he tries inconspicuously to do what is generally useful, without commotion and without pushing himself ahead of others.

After combat Simonov's hero invariably describes his "exploit" to the commander and the party organizer, invariably shares his "combat experience" so that it may be available to the whole unit. The real hero remains silent about his deeds, and shares his ~~combat~~ combat experience with no one; only an event or his comrades can disclose his

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immortal deed.

It is easy to uncover and describe the <sup>reality</sup> ~~essence~~ of the exploits of  
Simonov's hero; one needs only to visit the trenches after a battle.  
To discover the <sup>reality</sup> ~~essence~~ of the exploits of a real hero is very difficult.

. . .

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## CHAPTER XI

Onslaught on Germany

(The Breakthrough of 12 January 1945)

We are moving again

On the 12th we started a large scale advance. The breakthrough was effected in two stages. Early in the morning, while it was still dark, we "tested" with small forces the strength of enemy's fortifications.

There is a saying: "The avaricious pay double". So did we. We, who usually made the most of every shell, wasted a lot of ammunition in the air. At dawn we had to start the fire all over.

The terrain favored us: the natural boundary separating the troops not only sloped down from our side (the Germans were "under our feet"), but endless woods extended from our side down to the very front, and hid completely the supply roads. No bombing could hurt the enormous amount of artillery tanks "Katyushas" and ammunition hidden in the woods. From our side we could overlook an area at least three kilometers deep of enemy ground. The edge of our territory ran mostly along the river. On the side opposite our sector we even had a small bridgehead completely hidden from the enemy.

On this bridgehead we dug positions for two batteries long before the advance had started. No guns were put there prior to a special order. The same kind of positions were made in the forest lane. All the work was performed at night. We built gun platforms in a series of other spots. These were reserve positions to be used in case of need.

During the night of the eleventh, the commanding officer of the division's artillery ordered us to put a battery of our division in the lane for direct fire, two other batteries were put in hidden positions. Guns of the so-called "breakthrough" artillery also occupied their platform only the night before the battle.

Among the thousands of trees it was not easy to find our three batteries.

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Guns were distributed by batteries, four [guns] in a row; very seldom were two batteries together. The majority were 76 mm anti-tank guns, or 72 mm howitzers, with a smaller number of 152 mm howitzers and 45 mm toy anti-tank guns. A week before the attack battery commanders were ordered to report to observation points and to keep the enemy territory under careful observation day and night. The slightest movement, such as the reflection of the sun's rays on binoculars, the tip of a bayonet appearing for a split second, a match lit in the dark, the smoke of a cigarette, not to mention the sight of a man -- all this was considered as a target and was noted as reconnaissance data. Distances were calculated to each target and directions were established. A guards battalion of tubeless mortars [besstvol'nyye minomety] (Katyushas) were distributed in separate small islands in the woods. They became visible only in the morning mist, when, as usual, they started the "game" first. Mortar men of the heavy 130 mm mortars took position in foxholes (volch'ya yama). Many of them were across the river in the bridgehead. Hundreds of tanks and tens of thousands of infantry -- men were concentrated in the wood, 2 to 3 km from the front line.

The operation started on schedule at 10:00 a.m. This could not be compared to what was going on at 5 a.m. In the far background bomb explosions seemed like an earthquake. From time to time a part of the guns would "take a break" to increase their fire in depth. Then other guns would alter their range and so it went all the time . . . At two o'clock the majority of guns had become silent; those which continued firing increased their range to the limit. The sound of explosions receded and the forward zone became perfectly silent. The actual breakthrough had started.

At the beginning, as always the operation went unbearably slowly. One could think that everybody -- tanks, troops, infantry and artillery had agreed in common not to display any initiative and not to act.

Generals, colonels, etc. met at the command post. They talked, made

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decisions, consulted, coordinated actions; this consumed several hours.  
After this lengthy bustling about, finally a single tank started to crawl  
forward from out of cover somewhere.



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It crawled across our trench and stopped, as if undecided whether to go farther or not. A man got out of it, stood to the side and turned exit (iskhodnaya) toward the ~~jump-off~~ trench. "He's forgotten his tobacco pouch in the dugout!" said a battery commander who was watching with me. Later a second tank appeared, turned to the right and disappeared/ ~~from~~ from view. ~~Another half hour passed and~~ Another half hour passed and finally our "tobacco pouch" man appeared, followed by two tanks to which he pointed out the way with his ~~arm~~ hand. Then these two 34 ton tanks turned to the left, along the trenches. They had not gone a hundred yards when the first of them began to smoke--it was blown up by one of our mines. In two minutes the second suffered the same fate. Then, one after another, six tanks came out of the woods. Four of them advanced in the tracks of those which had been blown up, and two disappeared to the right behind a mound. Meanwhile out in no-man's-land two tanks suddenly appeared above the level of the land, like two hay stacks in the distance. The four which had turned to the left traveled half the distance safely and then for some reason began to hesitate. In this leisurely fashion the battle went on for ~~several~~ a few hours. Nine of the metal monsters were blown into the air in that time. Only the tank in which was our "tobacco pouch" man pressed forward, slowly but surely, to the German trenches, and there it, too, was blown up. It was the last to suffer such a fate; other ~~tanks~~ tanks followed in ~~the~~ its tanks as over a bridge and succeeded in reaching the Germans' side. After the tanks went the foot sappers and the infantry of the storm battalion, and after them Studebaker trucks with guns, and horse-drawn vehicles. The dam was broken, and the torrent began to rush.

Our artillery fire countered the weakest German fire. From remote positions a couple of German batteries leisurely fired, on the woods end on the road leading to the bridgehead. Finally their fire stopped.

. . . . When we advanced we saw the battered ground resulting

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from our artillery preparation. However, not a single killed or wounded German, not a gun or truck were in sight. . . It appeared as if the Germans had known in advance what was coming and had withdrawn with all their equipment. That is what had happened.

Later in the evening when we reached a broken and wooded area which had not been reached by our fire we found nine or ten dead Germans. . . . Later we found a few bodies of both Germans and Russians, and shortly before dark a German wounded in the leg. He was without overcoat and shoes (our men had already had time to undress him). Some of our men paid no attention to him, some others would give him a piece of bread or a cigarette. However, there were also "heroes - avengers." Vasilii Terent'yevich called me when a sergeant started to kick the prisoner. When I arrived the sergeant was gone, somebody had already managed to drive him off. . . The prisoner could not walk. He started to cry and begged us not kill him because he was not a fascist but a member of the German Communist underground party. . . Some soldier told me that another Fritz has been caught nearby; he was not wounded and could carry his comrade to the village. I went to look for the other prisoner, but the sergeant had already been there, killed him and left. While I was questioning soldiers about the sergeant, a Soviet officer went to the wounded Communist party member and fired a burst from a submachine gun, saying: "How you are all communists, but in battle you were glad to stand for Hitler." The soldiers are glad to march forward; they already have good shoes and good food.

15 January. Tshemokino.

-----

Konev issued an order that unit commanders are responsible for burial of killed Red Army men. It was suggested that each unit organize special burial teams and that honors be rendered to the dead. I asked the division artillery commander: "Whom would you authorize me to assign to this duty?" The commander answered: "Come on, Major, stop talking nonsense. As if you did not know why the headquarters issue such orders! Throw this stupid paper away and keep fighting as you did. And don't you take anybody from the

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batteries, especially not from the guns." The general commanding the division, who dropped in by chance, gave me the same talk when I asked him about burial teams:

"My friend, a paper can wait. If I took a dozen men from regiments in order to organize funeral homes, the very next day Pukhov himself or somebody else would cut off my head. Neither Konev nor Pukhov have given me gravediggers yet, and will not give me a single man. My regiments suffer plenty of hardship and you better stop <sup>ing</sup> talk about that with the division, or I shall take a dozen men from you for replacement of casualties."

17 January. On the Road

----- "Forward quickly where there is room for operations; spread panic in the rear of the enemy; don't let him gather his reserves for a counter-blow." Such is the order of the division commander. The advance of our ground troops is supported by our "Il" (Il'yushin fighters), accompanied by a multitude of red-nosed American fighters. Strangely enough there was not a single German plane in sight during a whole week of combat.

18 January. Morning. A village 35 km west of Keltse.

----- Rumors that Germans have abandoned many tanks, for lack of fuel are confirmed. At least, at every step one can find numerous tanks here, motor cars and armored carriers in good condition.

According to the Poles, the Germans have scattered through the woods and villages and are retreating westward on foot.

[ ] men captured a young German, a member of the Hitler Youth, 50X1-HUM  
and arrogant in his manner. Several of his junior officers were for shooting  
him particularly a Lieutenant Sergeyenko. [ ] decided to send him 50X1-HUM  
back to the assembly point. There were plenty of volunteers to take  
him back, first among them Sergeyenko, with a sly smile on his face.  
However, [ ] three signalmen who had not seen the prisoner before. 50X1-HUM  
and told them to be back within two hours. 7

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I do not know whether the prisoner was shot or not, but his guards returned very quickly, twenty minutes after they left, and said that he was sent to the rear with men going in that same direction. There is something suspicious about it. Vasya found that Sergeyenko also had made the trip. . . .

19 January 1945. On the Road.

. . . .

. . . I learned that the prisoner was killed. His murderers lied when they said that he was sent to the rear with other. . . Barbarians is what we are! How low we have fallen!

-----

22 January. On the Road.

1 p.m. Our column is in a wood, held up by some bottleneck. What an accumulation of tanks, "Katy<sup>ush</sup>as", and trucks, either towing guns or loaded with ammunition. The enemy is retreating on the entire front. Sometimes its rear guard troops block our road for a short while. The more often this happens for lack of coordination between the various types of troops we have. For instance, the tanks advance without infantry or artillery, until Germans hidden somewhere set a couple of tanks on fire; that is reason enough to stop the advance completely. Sometimes it is our infantry which strikes forward. Then any lagging armored carrier drives it into a panic. "I am bleeding to death. I am facing two hundred tanks" the infantry commander telephones then. The "bleeding" commander is then reinforced with artillery and tanks. In such cases there is an inevitable gathering of commanders. They consult and decide to lay down an artillery barrage. Batteries are put in position and preparation for artillery fire is carried on. Time passes; a couple of days elapse. Then it happens that on his own initiative some daring scout has visited during the night the "Two-hundred-tanks" positions and discovered the complete absence of any enemy forces. Then the herd which was dispersed in woods and in villages: men, equipment, and cattle stretch out along the road and start to proceed forward leisurely.

23 January. Piotrkuv.

I don't have a minute free. **US OFFICIALS ONLY** advance, we fly westward.

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25 January Zlochuv.

We advance at full speed. The Polish-German border is only 45 kilometers away. We came to Zlochuv at 6 a.m. I drove a truck pulling a car taken from the enemy. The trip was dangerous, my comrades even advised me not to go.

We travelled all the night, through woods and deserted villages, without previous reconnaissance. It seems that for the first time the soldiers did not sleep; they watched with submachine guns in hand, ready to start fighting at any minute.

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## CHAPTER XII

<sup>1</sup> In Germany  
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 (February-March 1945)

1 February. 2300 hours. Moscow time.

Grosschwartenberg - the first German town.

An hour ago we crossed the Polish border. We rush westward without stopping.

I entered ~~into~~ the first German town in a German car pulled by a German armored car running with German gasoline.

Grosschwartenberg was set on fire from all sides. Wonderful buildings are burning, there is no population, and nobody to stop the fire.

In the whole city there is only one crazy old woman remaining to "greet" the conquerors.

The German town is clean and pretty, there is not a single dirt street, not a wooden building; apartments are well furnished. The departing population left all their belongings. They are now being pillaged, destroyed and burned.

We now have reached the "den of the beast," I am afraid that in this "den" we ourselves may become real beasts. Should I write about the soldiers' behavior or should I wait? Maybe every army has its "monsters" and one should not worry about it.

It would be better to speak of my first impression of Germany. There follows quotations from the conversation of officers and men in his truck, which only show attitudes now already well known<sup>7</sup>

3 February. Trebnitz. a German Town.

We went therrere through country roads. We were lucky. Populated localities were not pillaged as much as those on the main road. Thousands of heads of cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry wandered around. We replenished our meat supply and we found also an invaluable treasure: an alcohol plant. Here we stocked up. We filled our motor car tanks, even that of our captured armored carrier, and all the spare drums. We even had to throw away a

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couple of cases of ammunition in order to make room. Soldiers filled with "healing liquid" all the thermos bottles, flasks and all the empty bottles they could find. Men also need some "fuel".

We spent the night in some village. The population, as everywhere else, was evacuated or left of their own free will. In the whole neighbourhood there was but one couple remaining, an old and deaf woman and her brother, even older than she. Inquisitive Ivans inspected them, looked into their eyes, felt their clothes and tried to talk to them. They paid no attention, continued their housework and it was easy to gather from their tired look that they despised us. "I bet that our brothers have already paid a visit here and played some tricks on them" said Vasiliy Terent'yevich.

As a matter of precaution we put the headquarters in the house of the old Germans; we wanted to drink only the water Germans drank themselves. All our propaganda tries to frighten us with German treacherousness, saying that when Germans leave they poison everything. In fact nobody ever takes any precaution. Our cook, after attempting unsuccessfully to make the German drink a glass of water, drank it himself in order to "analyze it."

As soon as the men had been billeted and had eaten, two telephone men then the Komsomol organizer, and later the chief of staff and somebody else all came with the same question:

"What do we do with Germans?"

"May we shoot these Germans, at least this shaking old man? What is the use of him, anyway? Do we have to feed him with our bread? Newspapers advise us: 'Kill the German'; so let us shoot him," requested one of our "hero-avengers".

I just had the time to answer the telephone man when Suchkov, the horse driver, rushed in. He was a lazy, worthless fellow whom none of the batteries had wanted.

"Comrade major, we caught two Germans, they are hiding in a house, they also have found out where our headquarters are located. May I try my

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submachine gun on the Germans. I have just cleaned it, and I am quite an expert with Germans."

I thought that it really was soldiers who were hiding. Actually, it was the same two old Germans. While the men I sent to investigate were away, the party organizer came and without thinking about what he was saying he asked:

"Who is going to execute the Hiterlites?"

Then came the chief of staff:

"Batteries are in position, guards are posted patrolling of the village is organized. I just do not know what to do with these two prisoners of war; we have no reason to keep them, if we shoot them all our troubles about them will be over."

"What's the use to bother with such rubbish; let them die in their own time; they do not have much longer to live anyway" I said, trying to pretend that I also despised the old couple.

Major, we are ordered to be merciless with enemies, no matter where we find them; are we going to coddle these two? If you were caught today they would bury you alive" argued the chief of staff.

I listened to everybody with great attention then said: "Well, you now may go to bed" then I kept silence, not arguing for or against the shooting. During this conversation the party organizer appeared with a proclamation written by Il'ya Erenburg. In the right corner of the proclamation a slogan caught the eye: "Death to the German invaders," Below it in large letters was the heading: "Kill the German." The slogan left some doubt as to the obligation to kill all Germans, but the title leaves no doubt, it requires the death of all Germans without exception, for the simple reason that they are Germans. In the text the demand to kill is even more plainly formulated: "Kill the German' Kill him wherever you see him; today by killing the German you draw closer to victory, if during a day you have not killed a single German, that day is wasted."

The party organizer brought the appeal and smiling ironically asked

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me whether he could read it to those present. I said he could do so, but I just cannot describe the shame of what followed and what is considered virtue by us. I shall first say that I forbade the old couple to be harmed.

In the morning I met the German in the yard and tried to talk to him. He stubbornly refused to answer my questions.

The worst among our "rowdies" tried to rape the old woman; however with her previous experience with former "guests" she managed not let them come close. She sat with a pail of boiling water within her reach, and greeted those who tried to penetrate into her room by scalding them.

I reached Trebnitz ahead of our column. The driver stopped the car near the cemetery. I wandered in the cemetery and was surprised by its beauty and order.

We had been told that the German proletariat lived miserably under capitalist domination. Now we could see with our own eyes how simple workers lived well there. We are now told a different story: that the Germans' luxurious life is recent and due to the war and pillage of countries conquered by Germany, and primarily to the slave labor of millions of Soviet citizens in German enterprises.

This cemetery existed before nazism, the houses were also built before that time and probably before ~~that time and probably~~ the First World War, trees along the first class highways are at least a hundred years old.

Our propaganda does not go into such details and considers us as children unable to use own brains.

Probably 5 February. A battery in a wood, west of Ranten.

We came here late last night. We passed through Obernick and Walau, and north of Stenau we forced our way over the Oder river.

Between Kel'tse and this place Germans retreated without resistance, but here they have gotten stubborn. It is reported that they have invented a new weapon "the Faust patron" [Panzer faust?] which looks like a club. Soldiers say: "Hitler is smart; now that he has no more tanks and artillery

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he has given clubs to his Prussians and thinks he can beat us with clubs."

15 February. Dibau. 3 a.m.

We have stopped near the Bober river. We left Ratenu after a minor artillery barrage. The Germans did not resist this time. However, near Primkenau lagging armored carriers scared our "infantry". This is wonderful! There is an alcohol plant here at every step. We have all the fuel we want . . . .

17 February. Dibau.

The enemy is entrenched in a wooded area across the Bober, and protected by the faust-patron, stopped us.

The "Fritzes" had a right to boast in their pamphlets about their new weapon; it deserves all the praise.

Previously we had challenged the Germans to battle in the woods. They could not stand such fighting and gave up the woods to us. Now it is the opposite: they act boldly in the woods and disturb us with unexpected advances. Yesterday the whole first battery was almost lost. It is located in the sharp angle of a woodless triangular area which we occupy on the western bank of the river. Until now Germans had made daytime sorties: they would creep towards the guns and start firing submachine guns, trying to scare us by pretending an attack. But they did not dare to attack seriously. The battery men lived under strain; these sorties were getting unbearable. Suddenly, after a routine daytime "game", the Fritzes started a "brawl" during the night. The squad farthest from the Germans started the noise first: "They are shooting from the rear, we are surrounded!" Then men from another gun got panicky and jumped into the river, rushing for shelter on the eastern bank. Although the battery commander did not run away, he could not do a thing with his frightened men in the dark.

Enemy aviation also disturbs us considerably. From morning til night fast fighters drop bombs on us (now fighters became bombers), and fire on the river crossing and on our gun positions. In groups of 10 to 15, one after the other they fly over us and dive from a low altitude. As a rule

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each fighter carries two bombs and drops them either separately or together, making several circles over the target. Our anti-aircraft get a couple of these hawks down from each flock. The Germans, however, do not stop and bomb us with increased fury.

Violent fighting is going on. Nazi Germany is reaching its end: we must apply our forces to the limit, in order to break its will power. No matter how hard, nerve<sup>6</sup>-racking and bloody is this struggle with the external enemy, its hardships seem insignificant if compared to the struggle with internal enemies. I make no mistake in saying that we (i.e., my chief, the Commanding Officer of the Division's Artillery, the Division's Commander and I) devote 90 percent of our time, strength and attention in fighting these internal enemies. These enemies are all kinds of shortages of ammunition, spare parts, fuel, and mainly, soldiers' equipment. I would not mention food, the amount of it is more or less sufficient, as a result of captured enemy supplies and the ability of soldiers to find whatever was saved by the civilians. Clothing is what has us tied hand and foot. Almost nothing of what was issued to the soldiers remains. Shoes and underwear consist of what we have taken from the Germans. Jackets and coats are worn out, trousers are worn beyond repair, and there are no warm jackets. During the February frost, at night, often in the rain, men would remain naked if they did not use enemy clothes they could lay their hands on. When advancing without fighting wearing enemy uniforms did not matter, Now in the woods, when it is difficult to recognize each other, Red Army men often start to shoot at each other. In our part of the wood there is movement day and night . . . All this crowd, wandering or staying in position is without exception wearing German uniforms, and many among them are like kids covered with captured daggers, pistols and gold stripes. The Germans relayed it quickly and started to make their way to our rear, as if they were Russians, and to kill our artillery crewmen. After the first such cases the crewmen were scared and shot at anybody coming close.

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Sentries in combat outposts especially, fearing a stab in the back, killed many of our men.

General Pukhov, stunned by the heavy losses which resulted from wearing German uniforms, categorically ordered us to get all these disgraceful uniforms off the soldiers. A wise order! What self respecting army would besmirch itself by wearing enemy rags? However, the order ignored a "trifling detail." What will the men wear?" The order is so strict that because of it the division commander himself is visiting the units. He came on us unexpectedly like a storm on a clear day. He had seldom visited us before; this time he came early in the morning, when it was still chilly, and caught all the members of the staff wearing warm German jackets. For five minutes the men were all lined up and were doing right and left face and about-face at the orders of the stern commander. The general made them all take off the German clothing and when the sergeants had removed it, he declared to the ranks: "The Party and the People entrusted you to your commander. He must justify this high mark of confidence and display Bolshevist skill and resourcefulness; then he will be able to get out of difficulty. As far as the Hitlerite equipment is concerned, don't you dare appearing wearing it again!" Having stormed at us and promised to fire (razognat') all the battalion officers if within 24 hours all Red Army men were not wearing Soviet uniforms, he left us to go to the rifle regiment next to us.

I called battery commanders and told them briefly:

"By 6 o'clock tomorrow you will report the discarding of all non-regulation clothing; otherwise you will be demoted as unqualified to command. The battery commanders did not even let me finish, but shouted all together:

"That's impossible!, you might just as well relieve us or our commands right away!"

The commander of the first battery, ten times decorated, said:

"Major, I can tell you right now, you can demote me if you want to; you can send me to a disciplinary battalion, but I can't possibly carry out your orders."

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My attempt to imitate the general and to take this position by storm was unsuccessful. I had to return to friendly terms with the battery commanders and discuss with them of the possibilities of carrying out the Orders of the General. We found only one solution: To take a part of the clothing from soldiers who had it and to give it to those who lacked it.

18 February. Glodessgroppe.

In two days by persistent effort we have transformed the appearance of our soldiers, using our own resources. It is true that the resulting gang looks rather patchy: some wear overcoats and some others warm jackets, or just plain jackets, but we are not parading in Moscow! This will do. We were also successful in combat; we pushed the enemy back several kilometers into the depths of the forest. Now my staff and the rear of the battalion are on the eastern bank, and we can freely fish in the Boher, using anti-tank mines. We are strongly established on the widened bridgehead, and we shall probably start preparing for a further advance.

General Pukhov's order has become the axle around which the wheel of our life is revolving. The Political Section has gone into action for the cause: meetings, gatherings for political information, conferences, etc. are going on. Unit commanders were made mainly responsible for the success of the political campaign. Day after tomorrow, if we are still here, I must make a report at a gun commanders' meeting on the subject: "The Soviet Regime and the Bolshevik Party alone can equip the Red Army and ensure victory over Hitlerite Germany."

20 February. Sommerwald. Afternoon.

After hard fighting the enemy has retreated from the Bober positions. We reached Naumburg, travelling on dirt roads, then we came here by the main road. The population here is more numerous and there is less destruction. Our "eagles" have found a raincoat factory and are stealing everything: finished raincoats, material, thread, lining, etc. The most vicious wander into apartments and <sup>steal</sup> watches and rings from the Germans.

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What shall I do? Shall I try to oppose this or shall I tell them to do as they please." No matter how strong I am, I cannot stop pillage and violence completely. For instance, where shall we find food? Hungary men will not fight. When a soldier attacks a woman, this is a different problem. One must struggle against this evil.

Two forces are fighting in me: honor and bitter necessity. What honor rejects, necessity forces me to do. It is hard in my position to be a soldier; it is even harder to be a commander; but it is quite impossible to remain a man.

21 February. An evening in the outskirts of a forest not far from a village.

I cannot find the name of the small village ahead of us. The German road-map I am using does not mention the small places.

We are pouring over the German territory like water from a broken dam... We circle hills leaving small islands, places where the enemy resists. Some "hills" such as Breslau are not taken yet. Enemies remain on our left, behind us, while on the right they hold on in the Glogan area, far in the rear...

We have very little infantry left, we have not seen tanks for a long time, not to mention aviation. Somehow our artillery men still hold together. We would not have stopped today on the outskirts of this forest if we had some infantry and at least a few tanks. A German company with a single gun was delayed here, probably by accident, and our entire division was so depleted in battles that it had to stop before this company.

22 February. The Neisse River, South of Guben

We are supporting the infantry regiment of the division. I do not know where the division headquarters are; neither does the regiment commander.

I have noticed that our "jokers" have started to go "hunting" for German women. No matter where they meet them they take them to "work." Even such an ascetic as Captain Selezner has been tempted by foreign women.

Here is the story of the battalion's Komsomol organizer after a quarrel during the night with the chief of staff:

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The chief of staff and the party organizer locked three women in different rooms and visited them in turn all through the night. The captain first selected a young girl; however, an hour later he rushed out, cursing her because he discovered that she had a venereal disease. He went to another woman. Then he was called to the headquarters. While he was away the party organizer managed to visit the two other women.

Now it has become known that the Komsomol Organizer also attacked the prisoners, hastily of course, while the Chief of Staff and the Party Organizer were reporting to the command and had left him to guard the German women.

In the morning my orderly was taking the two women out of reach of the battalion. He had not taken two hundred steps when a lieutenant with a group of armed men attacked him and took the women away.

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Forst

Probably 26 February. The west bank of the Neisse, near Forst.

In a dugout of the commander of the second battery in the bridge-head. We have been here for several days, up against the German defences on the Neisse.

~~X~~ We hold a small bridgehead, won with considerable loss of life. The river is at our backs and in front of us a dike. The men ~~ana~~ ~~ing~~ have dug in between the two, with one, or occasionally two, men to a hold. Near the dike, where it is as high as a man, real dugouts have been constructed; in these there is usually the commander of a ~~battal~~ battalion and his staff, a telephone, and orderlies. German tanks keep us under observation. We can see one or two here and there, but it is useless to fire on them; they are two kilometers away, and our guns cannot reach them. ~~They~~ serves

A ferry-boat ~~transports~~ ~~transports~~ for communication with the other bank. The Germans watch the crazy Russians run down from the woods one at a time and board the ferry. Then, as soon as the ferry shoves off from the bank, a tank gun opens fire, and the ferry either breaks loose from its rope or is moored to the other bank with its wounded passengers.

The bridgehead could not exist without the ferry. Day and night food supply parties under ~~man~~ sergeants bring up food; orderlies hurry with reports; and officers rush under fire from position to position, as demanded by their oath of service. If their good judgement caused them to stop this, they would be called cowards and ~~o~~ loafers. Under the orders of the political section, a herd of political workers are running about here; ~~they~~ it is prescribed for them that they shall carry on agitation with special zeal in the most dangerous places.

Every day from five to ten men lose their lives in the bridgehead.

We could generally avoid these unnecessary losses. In other sectors, under more favorable circumstances, we have won plenty of bridgeheads from the enemy. However . . .

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27 February.

To the number of definitions of war I shall add one more: War is a period in the life of society when masses of organized men are kept idle. Here in battle, in circumstances of legalized crime, men take delight in two of the most harmful things in the endless drama of human evil: killing and idleness, with food <sup>at hand.</sup> ~~ready~~. A soldier spends a day, a week, a month, a year in the trenches, doing nothing. The enemy does not attack, neither do we. Even when the soldier is busy, digging trenches, for instance, he realizes that he is still being idle, because the trench is useless and serves no good purpose.

For the purpose of murdering, the cream of society has been assembled here from both sides. Murder is the highest principle of morals established there. When one man is killed, society punishes the criminal; mass murder, however, is encouraged. Where is the logic in this? A violently insane man is put in a straitjacket or sent to an asylum. Where can one get rid of a society which has gone mad?

Men for a thousand years build a civilization, establish moral principles and standards of behavior, then crush everything into dust with a single blow.

1 March. Brand, in the Gorlitz region.

I have just attended a meeting held by the division commander. The General made a long report. The end of it made everybody laugh:

"The enemy is treacherous," warned the General, "not only does he blow up bridges, and puts all kind of obstacles in our path, but in order to make us harm he poisons the food he has left. You yourselves know that we eat better than any army in the world; it couldn't be better. We are only short of vegetables, and lack enough acids. There are not enough acids for the soldiers - and that's just too bad. So they search the houses for acids. I have seen myself that they do not take a thing from the population, except canned fruits, berries, and, of course, liquor."

The words about a shortage only of acids made us laugh.

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The General also announced the special honor bestowed upon front line soldiers by Comrade Stalin. The Supreme Commander has ordered that packages of goods be sent home from Germany. Each member of the armed forces is entitled to send one package per month; soldiers may send 5 kgs, officers - 10 kgs, and generals - 15 kgs. The commander of the "Vo<sup>s</sup>merka" dared to ask where we would get the things to send. There are not department stores here at present. Are we supposed to pillage the population?

"Isn't there enough stuff left by Germans in the villages they have abandoned? You can find as much as you want." The Chief of the Political Section answered for the General. The Chief of the division's artillery warned us that there would be a visit of a delegation of stakhanovites from the rear.

2 March. Brand.

I forgot to say that yesterday the main subject of the meeting was ~~in~~ a study of the German faust-patron. We were ordered rapidly to acquaint ourselves with this powerful weapon. Our battalion was the first to solve this problem and the division commander awarded the order of the "Red Star" to lieutenant Pitirimov. Battalion and battery commanders will meet today and Pitirimov will demonstrate how to use the faust-patron. Battalion commanders later are to give the same explanation to company and platoon commanders and the latter to the soldiers. The General promised that each officer and ~~soldier~~, who learns how to use the faust-patron will be allowed to send a double package home.

I live in a state of great anxiety. For some reason our "Smersh" agent [upolnomochenny] (front line NKVD officer) is very cordial to me, and is directly seeking my friendship. He has attached himself to my house, stays a long time in my room, tells vulgar stories, tries to invite confidences, is very obliging during the meals, and incites me to drink more. Does this mean that the hawk has chosen its chicken?

I don't understand it. I feel no guilt, but if he selected me as a victim I know that "shortcomings" will be found, sufficient to pass any sentence.

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9 March. Same Place. Morning.

I feel terrible. My head aches terribly and I don't feel like doing a thing. I do not care about life and I am not interested in my work. I am tired. I do not know whether the cause is the war or something else... Moreover, this delegation has come; what a commotion there is about it: meetings, parades, receptions at the division commander's, even at the Army commander's. We did everything but carry them aloft in our arms, the commander of the unit, while I, they are visiting, treated them with the greatest indifference. My behavior is not apparent among all this commotion; however, I see something poisonous building up on the minds of some.

And this unbearable "Smersh" agent has also tagged along; what does he expect from me? I am a weak man another would expose himself to German bullets or would shoot himself; I lack the will to do either one. I am a miserable coward!

21 March. Hammer.

My premonition has materialized. The delegation could not stand my indifference. During the solemn reception given my Pukhov, the head of the delegation, among other requests for the battalion they were sponsoring asked that "the arrogant commander who despises party<sup>y</sup> work" be replaced by another more suitable officer.

On the 10th of March at midnight I was called to the telephone and told that I was placed at the disposal of the Army command. No reason was given. On the 20th I left the unit. Yesterday and today I went to the personnel section. Nobody knows a thing about me. I did not see the "boss" himself. I am attached again to the damned "reserve."

The highest form of "crime," unadmissible for a Red Army officer is; neglect of "political education" work. Their suspicions were right. Not only is this job distasteful to me, but I hate it because it stupefies the men. Dozens of times I have been convinced that men can be led into battle without this boring propaganda narcotic. I firmly believe our soldiers are not idiots or perverted criminals who do not understand the meaning of honor and of duty as soldiers, and I think that they can fight

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without indocrination. I notice, from my own experience and from that of many friends from the division here in the reserve, that indocrination has results contrary to those expected.

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next page*



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22 March. Hammer.

This morning I was finally received by the "boss" himself (the commander of the artillery of the army). To my surprise, there was no lecture nor reprimands, no demands for explanations or confessions such as usually characterize such occasions.

"Why didn't the delegations like you?" he asked me in a pleasant manner, addressing me with the familiar pronoun after the first few sentences.

"Well, I couldn't receive them with all the elegance shown by the ~~division~~ <sup>tried</sup>", I answered him. ~~the~~ division and the army commanders even if I ~~tried~~ <sup>tried</sup>; I'm a commander of a combat unit and not of a ~~souvenir~~ captured materiel dump, and they just came after souvenirs."

"Well, don't worry. Forget what has happened and rest a while. You'll go back to combat duty. It seems you have had no leave since you have been at the front. If this were in Poland I could find some pretext to give you leave, but here it is not permitted. But never mind; the war will soon end. Take it easy in the reserve; if I find something suitable for you, I'll send for you."

~~Remained in~~ ~~the~~ The friendly general answered several questions for me frankly; he was the first one to tell me directly that I had been removed from duty/at the request of the ~~head~~ <sup>by Pukhov himself</sup> of the delegation, the leader of which, a party worker, had found a lack of respect on my part for party education of the ~~work~~ soldiers.

. . . .

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22 March. Evening.

Each Red Army officer is above all an agitator. His duty is to promote bolshevist ideas. He is first a propaganda agent, then an officer. There is not a day where the commander is not lecturing his men on political subjects. However, our political sections still are not satisfied with the levels of bolshevist development of soldiers and blame the officers for lack of zeal and insufficient dissemination of propaganda.....

As if there was another army in the world with a propaganda apparatus as large as that of the Red Army.....

At one of the conferences the chief of the political section of our division told us that 59 officers of company and field grade alone, on regular salaries [s tverdy<sup>m</sup> okladom zhalovaniya] were attached to his political staff in the division. All of them are of high rank: the chief of the political section is a colonel; his deputy, a lieutenant colonel; six other deputies and assistants are also lieutenant colonels and majors (the secretary of the party commission, the deputy in charge of the Komsomol, three division agitators, and the agitator in charge of propaganda among enemy troops). The political section chief has at least 25 among the best trained and reliable communists and members of the Komsomol with higher or secondary education, who, as privates or sergeants, are employed as technical secretaries, secretaries, accountants, etc. This is only the apparatus of the division's political section. Each regiment of the division has its own "political staff" which is almost as large. It is headed by the deputy regiment commander for political affairs - a lieutenant colonel. The deputy political officer of the regiment has under him: the party organizer of the regiment, a major; the Komsomol organizer, a captain; the agitator, a captain; and dozens of other agitators and propagandists officers who do not belong to the regular staff.

Then follows the political staff of the battalion: the deputy for the political section, a major; the party organizer, a captain; the Komsomol organizer, a first lieutenant; and millions of political workers

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not regularly on the staff - agitators, editors, song leaders, lecturers, etc. Each company has a small political staff headed by a party organizer, with a deputy and a Komsomol organizer. In order to achieve complete domination of a company by the bolshevist influence, the party and communist members of the company are distributed in platoons in proportion to the number of non-party soldiers in each platoon. Each section has a party attache [partprikreplenny] (the "ambassador" of the party) charged with watching day and night that no soldier has anti-Soviet ideas, that he talks only in favor of the Soviet regime and the party, that he reads and knows all the collections of decisions and orders of the party and the government and that in no case does he read enemy leaflets. "The party ambassador" is supposed to fill the soldier's spare time with talks, readings, stories and meetings to the extent that he had no time for the free-thinking which would be against the party's interests. "To take possession of the soldiers soul" - thus is formulated the political work among the troops. Besides the official political propaganda officers and party and Komsomol activists, every officer, whatever his rank, and every man decorated with orders and medals, by virtue of his position, must carry out this line and must constantly speak for the party and the government. After each battle large meetings or small gatherings are held, where the commander is obliged to point out heroes who distinguished themselves in battle for the "cause of the Lenin-Stalin party." The honored heroes are in turn forced to talk to soldiers on: "how, with boundless love for the party, the government and the Leader," they went into danger.

Obviously, when accomplishing his exploit the soldier does not care about the leader or the government; nevertheless he is forced to tell the others that he went into the battle with the sole purpose of "showing his devotion to the party and the leader."

In order to take possession of the soldiers soul," each division has a printed newspaper, while regimental battalions and companies publish a wall news sheet, and platoon sections publish "battle leaflets."

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The political section requires the commander to have a detailed plan of party-political work specially devoted to problems of protecting the advance of troops, etc.

Each soldier's day begins with political information (politinformatsiya) and ends with meetings and assemblies for praising the party and its leader. Every spare minute of the soldier's life he is fed to saturation with ideological pills. In spite of all that the authorities still are not satisfied. No matter who the commander is, he is blamed for inadequately instilling party spirit into the soldiers. There is no commander who has not been accused of a dislike for bolshevist education.

In the Reserve

11 March. Hammer.

I continue loafing in the reserve. Sometimes I am summoned by the command. Most of the time is spent in card games, less in bicycling or reading newspapers or books. Unfortunately it is almost impossible to obtain books..... My orderly (at least I have been able to keep him) categorically refused to make my bed in the crowded room assigned me by the commandant, and hunted around the town until he found a suitable separate room. We are well off compared with the other reservists (there are at least ten of us <sup>or</sup> ~~lo~~ers of solitude). There is no civilian population in the village; houses were pillaged as everywhere else. In our combat units only a few selected soldiers who had recently distinguished themselves in combat, were allowed to send home one parcel per man. When granting the soldier this privilege, the commander reminded him of his duty to fight with even greater self-denial. Very often the sending of packages were accompanied by meetings.

Here in the rear every adjutant, not to mention staff officers, send as many packages as they can grab things to fill. Therefore houses have been completely emptied not only of valuable things but even of rubbish. Adjutants and orderlies of high ranking officers rummage in houses and basements, collect rubbish, and cut leather from couches and chairs to make shoes for

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I consider our life and I cannot believe that man, not as an individual, but as a whole society, or maybe a whole nation, can fall so low. Sometimes such thoughts result in some quite original conclusions.

"Truth, equality, virtue," etc. - how many such lifeless words are there? There was a time when men shed their blood and perished in revolutions and social cataclysms fighting for a better life for future generations.

We grew up a descendents of the October revolutionaries, the older generation suffered for our happiness. And what do we have which is better than what they had? According to the stories of the older people, in the old days, nobody ever saw such suffering as is our present lot.

In 1928 we lived relatively well and started our First Five Year Plan. We expected then to begin to live very well by the end of the five years, to double or even to triple the food supply of the population. We reached the long awaited end of the period with the Ukraine dying of hunger, and misery all over the country.

Then we started the Second Five Year Plan. We expected in many branches of industry to surpass Western Europe and we promised a comfortable life to workers and peasants. We concluded that Five Year Plan in terrible bloodshed - "the Yezhov days." We discovered spies and saboteurs, who do not exist in any other country, and who in the past did not exist in our own.

Then we planned the Third Five-Year Plan and attained the worst end of all: War.

At present we are completing the Fourth, "Wartime" Five Year Plan *[sic]*. And what do we have? We have the flower of our society, the Army, transformed into a pack of hungry wolves, into bandit gangs. For four years propagands has incited us against "the German beast", and since we <sup>always</sup> ~~we~~ go to extremes, our propaganda has poisoned us to the extent of making beasts of ourselves. It seems that nobody denies the high humanitarian qualities of the Russians; however, thrown off the high

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moral levels we have now fallen lower than animals. It is not enough that we machine-gun herds of cows (you see, the cows are fascist!), we pillage and destroy homes of a peaceful population, we burn houses, even worse, we rape all the women, without exception, and we spread among them and among our own people the most dreadful diseases. We even commit a much bigger crime, since at the same time we pronounce such sacred words as "Fatherland, Honor, Justice!".....

The war has not ended yet, but the end is close. And who would guarantee that during the solemn banquet celebrating the victory poison will not be distributed? Who can guarantee that after the war the Yezhov purge will not be repeated, in order to blame on somebody the mass insanity of today?

In the Reserve

15 March. Hammer.

If it were possible to check our spiritual "ego" as an occultist can check our eyes the conclusion would be that we are just "hypermetropic" dreamers and sterile visionaries.

Was it our nature, or our history and culture, which enabled us to use our "spiritual sight" only for "remote" objects, and made use hardly able to see those which are close to us? We are delighted with the thought of an amazing future, and our present starvations, miserable home, and spiritual serfdom do not bother our conscience. Europeans, such as the Germans, for instance, have a different mentality. I am surprised at the small size of their country, their lack of natural resources in comparison with ours. But they live a thousand times better than we Russians do. Look at their apartments, their wonderful furniture and at all they have invented to make their lives easier....

They are practical people and live for the present. They do not care what will happen in a hundred years.

We live in poverty today, hoping to get fabulously rich tomorrow. We spend our present like passengers waiting to change trains, first trying to kill time and not thinking about comfort. Unfortunately our trains are behind schedule.

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Sometimes it seems that as men we are not too bad; we have our own history, our culture and our traditions, it seems that we are a great and able nation. Sometimes, however, it seems that we are the lowest level of Asiatics. And one wants to ask: Where do we belong to in the concert of nations - in the cheap gallery, in the orchestra seats or in the box for honored guests?

It seems to me that we happen to be in all these places. We, Russians are present, our ticket is good for both the cheap gallery and the expensive box seat. But we can't stay in the same place. While others sit quietly and learn, we Russians wander about the hall. "Why listen to other people," thinks the Russian, "when I can put on an act myself." Wearing the mask of a protector, Russians sometimes appear among the common public, sometimes show up in glittering attire in the boxes of the elite.

When fate weighed out to nations at the time of their birth their measure of good and evil, of culture and backwardness, when it separated Europe and Asia, it accidentally poured out to the Russians each of these without measuring. The result is a "mixture of contrasts." There is not a country which has the same amount of national, historical, cultural and national contradictions as ours.

On the one hand we are a united "monolithic" country, on the other a conglomerate of 180 nationalities such as is found nowhere else in the world. One half of our body is in Europe and shares its civilization; the other half is merged with Asia. This makes our customs, morals, character, language, history and science a mixture of the European and the Asiatic.

Our country is one of natural wealth: the Urals, Siberia, the Ukraine, the Far East, each of these areas rivals region in the world. But we are the most destitute people in Europe. Our primitive way of living makes our houses look like huts in comparison with those of Western Europe.

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We build the powerful Dneproprogress [error for Dneproges] and Magnitogorsk, but the majority of our villages have no electricity and never had any power machinery.

We are as wide as an ocean, we are the lords of two continents; on the other hand we are narrower than anybody in Europe. Our lack of roads, and of organized communications, our cultural, economic and trade isolation, and the patriarchal structure of our life, in the central part of the country as well as in the outlying areas, all make us narrow.

We created one of the great culture of the world; we produced Tolstoy, Pushkin, Dostoyevskiy, Chaykovskiy, Repin, Pavlov and Shalyapin, but we covered the scroll of honor bearing these names with the rag used to dust off the statues of tyrants.

Our famous "great soul" sometimes reaches such proportions that it has room in it for slavery. One does not have to look far for an example: We are slaves now. We were slaves of Peter, of Ivan the Terrible, of Dimitri, the Impostor, and of many others including even the Mongols.

On the one hand we are great benefactors and suppressors of aggression: we expelled the Tartars, vanquished Napoleon, now we are curbing Hitler; on the other hand we are evil usurpers. We have seized what did not belong to us; we are doing the same thing now. We liberated Poland only to conquer it; we invaded the other countries with the purpose of robbing them; we pour into Germany in order to devastate and to enslave it.

When visiting other people, we talk a great deal and request that we be listened and to have our opinions considered; but in our own home we cannot bear to hear the opinions of others, especially when objections are made to what we say.

We possess immense territory; nobody has more land than we do. However, there is no place for man in these great spaces; they are not attractive, but repelling. People run away from us rather than come to us.

In words, we are the champions of the most advanced democracy; in deeds, we have created the most tyrannical.

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This is how we Russians are; we have the highest virtues side by side with the most odious vices.

Our national character, also unlike that of other peoples, lacks harmony. Sometimes we seem to be overcome by inertia; we are lazy and careless. At other times our nature requires excessive action and we behave as if in a frenzy. Sometimes we are ashamed of ourselves; we are ashamed to speak Russian; we take a fancy to the language of old-fashioned Parisian tutors. Then we keep our doors wide open to all who may wish to enter; at other times we lock our doors to our best friends.

On the one hand we are a thousand years old; on the other, we are children with unbalanced character.

We start a number of things, but we achieve nothing. We do not create for the sake of creating; creating is a game for us, we are interested in the process and not in the result.

Compared to some other nations we are an elephant among insects. Our skin is so thick and coarse that we do not feel small pricks that would destroy others; but if we get sick, our groans shake the whole world.

We rejected the religions of Genghis Khan and of Mahomet, and declared ourselves followers of Christ, but we did not adopt Christ and Christianity as we should have adopted them; the Asiatic influence prevented us from doing so. Therefore we wander in a void between the Bible and the Koran and we lack spiritual balance. It is not an accident that sometimes we are ultra-Christian sometimes terribly anti-Christian. Our religion of today, materialistic communism, was given to us as a punishment for our instability: This imported religion, these remnants of food from some strangers' table, this garbage from the spiritual kitchen of the West which we picked up when our spiritual starvation became unbearable, gives us no satisfaction. We shall have no common sense and no peace until we achieve through suffering a religion of our own which will answer all the requirements of our wide spiritual world.

This is how we Russians are.

I heard an anecdote here. What is the difference between Peter and Stalin? - Peter opened up a window to Europe; Stalin has closed it.

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19 March. Hammer.

Today for the first time I have decided to confess openly that I repudiate the ideas which kept my mind imprisoned for fourteen years.

I am thirty two years old. I have been a member of the Bolshevik party for fourteen years. I was not quite eighteen when I joined the party. Actually I did not join it; the Komsomol organization transferred me there during the celebration of the October revolution. The Secretary of the party cell brought my party card already filled out and handed it to me during the ceremonies. This was my reward for being a shockworker of the organization. Frankly, I would never have dared to ask for party membership; moreover, my mother objected to it. However, I was sincerely pleased when the card was handed to me and I was even proud. Quite obviously I knew nothing either about politics in general or about the policies of the Bolshevik party.

I graduated from the institute in 1937 at the head of my class, and I got a responsible job in a plant. My first doubts arose when I was working as an engineer during the Yezhov purge. They had yet assumed no definite form, but here was an urge to find the truth. I decided to study some more, to find some sense in life and some cause for current events. It was hard for a young engineer to escape from a Soviet plant, however, my insistence won out.

I looked in vain for answers to problems I could not understand. Neither the program of the new institute nor the lectures and books accepted in our library gave a true answer to the questions with which I was preoccupied. I studied for three years and did not increase my knowledge. My doubts only increased. I started to argue with teachers, to express my dissatisfaction with the lecturer who distorted Marx and Lenin, and at a certain point I wanted to write to Stalin himself and to complain about the unsatisfactory teaching of social sciences. I thought: "Stalin wants to enlighten us by teaching us truth, while the administration of the institute is sabotaging his work by teaching lies." But events moved faster than I: a Commission of the TSK VKP(c) came to the institute, discharged a lecturer whom all the students liked and who was in charge of teaching Western European literature.

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The Commission acting for the Party's Central Committee and for Stalin, praised precisely what I wanted to complain about and fired the teacher who taught us actual knowledge and culture. I lost then what remained of my faith in the official leaders. I still remained in the party but my heart was not in it anymore. Although I lacked sufficient knowledge, I tried to make a critical analysis of Marxist teachings. Obviously nothing constructive and sensible could result in my mind.

I started the war with firm expecting to see the end of Hitler and Stalin, with the strong belief in triumph of democracy not only in Germany but also in our country. Today I am disillusioned. The foundations of the Brown Fascism are falling to pieces, but those of the Red and more bloody Fascism will grow stronger. And I have no ideas in my mind, nothing to believe, and nothing to expect.

What do we have to expect after Hitler's collapse?

There is perhaps one bright spot in the gloom - my soul is now liberated from the heavy burden of the Marxist religion. Now my unburdened mind will find it easier to search for a new religion.

Yes, a religion. He who said, "Without religion man would become an animal," was right. A man cannot exist without religion.

#### In the Reserve

20 March.

As long as we were marching, half naked and hungry, towards the German borders, we felt that our suffering was necessary to defend our country, and we were jealous of our honor and our dignity as Russian soldiers. When we entered Germany we were made to understand that we are not Russians anymore, but Soviet soldiers "bringing freedom to the German people." We remembered then what kind of "freedom" is brought by Soviet soldiers. The experience of "liberating" the Baltic countries, the Western Ukraine and Belorussia was still in our mind. We felt then like conquerors of a foreign land which we did not need, in which we had to establish there the same unbearable regime which ruled in our own country. We regretted that so much blood had been shed in vain.

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This flood of blood is drowning the foreign invader but does not touch our own usurper who is the main enemy of Russian People. We advanced towards a great victory, we gloried in our successes, we thought that we should be free, and what is the actual result? Everything remains as it used to be, as in a prison; there is no light in the gloom. It is as if a funeral march were being played for the burial of our shattered hopes. In a short time our men have been changed from Russians to Soviets, from goodmen to evil.

We had an internal enemy who tied our hands, plugged our ears and blindfolded us. He made us deaf and dumb, kept us in darkness and slavery, and feared that we would see the light and hear the free speech of others and would be tempted by freedom and rise against him. We were kneeling in front of him disunited and helpless. We lacked the awareness and experience to rise and attack him all together. Then foreigners came and awok our consciousness; we felt they would remove our chains off and set us free. Unfortunately they were bandits and we had to drive them from the land of our fathers. We undertook that task conscientiously.

Even before we have avenged ourselves on the aggressor, still heavier fetters have been forged for us, and the dictator seeks a terrible revenge for the desire we have shown for freedom. Against the external enemy from outside we marched in closed ranks, supported by the whole world. When we face the slave-owner in our own country we are dispersed like dust; we have no unifying idea just as we have no skilled leaders. My feeling of happiness resulting from the approaching victory is stifled by a feeling of deep disappointment. Our victory, won at such a cost in battle, is draped in mourning. "It is better to die in battle than to return now to the prewar tyranny" said, in a moment of anger, Major Chernov, who recently returned from leave in Khar'kov. Chernov is not alone. Each of us, soldiers and officers, feel the same.

As usual we have more of a premonition of the future than any reasoned conclusion regarding it. My Vasiliy is a faithful communist and a former chairman of village soviet. In Poland he said that he was

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glad that the war was approaching its end, but that this end may come any day, he appears unhappy about a return to peaceful life, curses his job as chairman of the village soviet, says it is unbearable and wants to work in a <sup>factory</sup> ~~factory~~ in some city after he is demobilized. My driver Gribanov fears the approaching "Victory." Gunner Chkalov and the party organizer of the division (a party member since 1929) feel the same. And who does not?

Under the stress of such great disappointment men forget everything, start drinking, pillage, become arsonists and killers. Many of the most disciplined, formerly modest and quiet soldiers now in Germany are ready for any crime.

#### In the Reserve

21 March. Hammer.

I have just returned from the party meeting. Just as in the combat units, party members here are blamed for not getting courageous soldiers to join the party.

Our party members are caught between two fires: they are either forced to recommend for party membership all who would apply for it, or they are blamed for "abuses" in recommendations for party membership. When the time comes for campaigning for party membership, lower party organizations accept everybody without discrimination and oblige party members to recommend people whom they do not know at all and have met for the first time. Six months later another campaign starts for "correcting errors." Previously the obligation was to contribute to the growth of the party; now there is an attack on "wholesale" acceptance without careful screening.

As a rule candidates do not apply for membership from their own convictions, but from necessity. In four years of military life I can recall only one case of voluntary application... The case became famous in all the units of the Voronezh front.... Today at the party meeting Major General Voronov, Chief of the Political Section of the 13th Army, stressed the case of the cook in the reserve.

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"Our party," said Voronov "is really a party close to the people, it relies upon the mass of the people and from it draws its strength. The people rightly considers the party as its leader and sends to it its best sons. Our distinguished soldiers and advanced Stakhanovites of the rear go to their party in their country's hour of travail, and apply for membership in the Bolshevik ranks. We do not need to look far for examples. Pfc Petrov, a modest and disciplined comrade has recently applied for party membership. We have many men like Petrov. Such an example shows clearly that the Party is liked by our people and has an authority over it.

I have known this cook for quite a while. Last fall he was urged to join the party, but without success...Now he has followed the suggestion of his friend Major Khasanov, who said to him:

"Fedya, get rid of them; tell them that you agree. It will make no difference to you whether you do or not, but if you don't, they will never stop bothering you."

"Improvement in theoretical knowledge among Communists of the front lines" was the second item on the agenda. The report was presented by colonel of the political section. ~~He~~ He said that an overwhelming majority of the front line communists spend their time everyday in thorough study of the classics of Marxism-Leninism. According to the speaker only a few party members fail to appreciate the value of theoretical education and to use their spare time in enriching their minds from the great works of the coryphaei [leaders] of scientific thought.

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At this meeting sharp criticism was to be directed against these negligent members, said the speaker.

Out of 60 communist officers present (most of them party workers), not one ~~man~~ was willing to take part in the discussion which followed. After waiting for a considerable time for someone to start the discussion, the chairman began to call on various of them by name; of ~~twenty~~ each thus called on, none would speak, ~~all~~ pleading insufficient ~~training~~ training in communism, lack of time, lack of textbooks, etc. It appears that none had worked toward his "growth in Bolshevist consciousness."

~~Assistant (Voyenfel'dsher)~~  
"Medical ~~officer~~ Zernov," said the party organizer of the reserve to a young officer ~~(officer)~~, "tell the meeting why you came to the political lesson today unprepared. ~~And many many many many~~"

It seems that ~~Zernov~~ <sup>'s</sup> in the political training period had gotten tangled up in ~~the~~ Lenin and ~~the~~ Martov ~~wordings~~ of the first paragraph of Party Regulations. Lenin said that "everyone" (kazhdy) could become a member of the party; Martov - "anyone" (vsyakiy). Zernov considered both ~~wordings~~ identical in meaning.

He asserted as much to the party meeting. The ~~ham~~ leaders of the reserve fell on him like a pack of wolves on a stray lamb. Suddenly a subject had been found for discussion, and the meeting livened up. How they worked over the "offense" of Zernov!

General Voronov, ~~ø~~ closing the discussion, expressed satisfaction with the "concrete, business-like character of the meeting", and his remarks were entered in the minutes and adopted as a resolution of the meeting.

...

22 April. En route, near Finsterwald.

We have ~~started~~ started a big offensive and are advancing successfully. Two days before the beginning of the operation I got leave, but did not have time to go. The first day of the battle the commander of an artillery regiment of the guards division was killed, and the command decided to replace him with me. We are on the march day and night. . .

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28 April.

The war has brought me into the capital of ~~the province of~~ Brandenburg province. We arrived yesterday after an 80-km trip. The infantry regiment of our division came with us travelling on overloaded Studebakers, on trailers and even on guns. Brandenburg is not taken yet. We occupy its eastern part, the rest, across the river, is still in German hands. The city is burning, the population is fleeing, many over to our side.

30 April. Brandenburg.

Now the angry Russian is sitting on the beaten Prussian. Ivan has made his way into the "lair of the Fascist beast", and the hour of revenge has come for us.

We are ~~re~~<sup>A</sup>vengeing ourselves on the Germans for beginning the war, for the insult to our honor, for the blood we have shed, for the loss of our relatives and our friends. And how we are revenging ourselves!

"Kill the German!" This has been dinned into our ears throughout four years of war, on every occasion and by every device of training and propaganda.

And now we have reached our goal: with our bayonets we carry death to the Germans and to everything German.

Fortunately for us ninety percent of the soldiers and officers are deaf to the demands of propaganda. Ten percent, perhaps, react to it. Half of this ten percent are affected by these terrible slogans as a symbol of revenge for murdered relatives or for the privations suffered during the war. But this half condemns banditry and behaves decently. The remaining five percent represent a completely amoral element, they have been completely corrupted by reading propaganda literature, especially the articles of Il'ya Erenburg. This element makes the life of the German population a real hell.

Yesterday two signal corps men, one after the other, raped two women; a lieutenant "on a voluntary basis" spent the night with a refugee from Brandenburg; ~~the~~<sup>A</sup> ~~same~~ ~~man~~ ~~and~~ ~~drunk~~, raped a young girl in the presence of her parents. The same man, running after women,

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pistol in hand, created a great commotion in two streets. Several Red infantrymen went around the streets raping women and stealing watches.

It is like this every day.

Yesterday a woman from Kiev was brought to me. She ran away with German friends from the burning town of Brandenburg. They were kind people and helped her when Hitler was in power. Now she is trying to help them. My "omni present" Vasilii "dug her out" for me from somewhere as an excellent interpreter. She asked me to go with her to a house where they were hiding several women and girls. The Germans, when they saw us from the neighbouring houses, rushed up to us with complaints. I told them through the interpreter that the Russian Army was forbidden to rape and pillage and that they should report to me if they saw any hoodlums. These poor women are absolutely desperate. An eleven year old girl was raped three times in a day, and her terrified mother suggested a "compromise": attach one soldier to every young woman; let him do with her whatever he pleased, but keep others, spreading venereal disease, away from her.

I ordered commanders to organize meetings and to threaten that culprits would be shot.

This did not help. The same sanitary instructor raped two other children today. This is the conversation the medical assistant had today with this gangster in uniform.

The Medical Assistant: "Kryuchkov, stop this; you are dishonoring our unit."

Kryuchkov: "But how do I dishonor it, Lieutenant."

The Medical Assistant: "By raping women and robbing people."

Kryuchkov: "What do you mean, Lieutenant? Shouldn't I even pinch these daughters of Hitler? I must destroy them to keep them from producing any more fascists. And how about this, Lieutenant; we came to destroy these Germans and you are protecting these vermin and as far as robbing is concerned, I take five kilograms of that junk, exactly what I am entitled to take. Stalin himself by a People Commissar's order, allowed us five kilograms, and you, ten. I can't think Stalin was a fool when he authorized

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sending parcels from Germany. The damned Germans won't give me voluntarily the five kilograms I am entitled to. Where am I to get them? Tell me, lieutenant, where can I get the things to fill my package? Stalin knew that the poor soldier at the front would find no place to get them; therefore he authorized us to take from these vermins.

The Medical Assistant: "Comrade Stalin, when he authorized the packages, did not have in mind the pillaging of defenseless civilians, and you pillage them.

Kryuchkov: "Lieutenant, tell us where can soldiers get five kilograms of stuff? There are no shops. You yourself have sent 10 kilograms. Did you buy them? Each major or general has sent 10 kilograms. Where did they get them? Do you think their orderlies are not pillaging German houses. I have no orderly, I am just a soldier and must take care of myself.

I would like to say a few words as a defense against possible future criticism of our long-suffering army. <sup>2</sup>from previous conversations with Poles, and here with Germans, I could see that they despise us. They consider themselves Europeans, and us Asiatics and Barbarians. I am sure that any other army, German, Polish, British or even American, if it had spent four years in the front lines under our propaganda would become a hundred times worse than ours. I am amazed to see the honesty and good spirit of our men, the majority of whom have not lost their humanity under the effect of this irresistible propaganda.

I am happy when I see a Red Army soldier helping a German....Here follow examples of Russian help and kindness to individual Germans<sup>7</sup>

1 May. Brandenburg.

The city has not been taken yet. The battle rages on. For the last two days we have been surrounded. German divisions retreating from Berlin press on us from the rear.

The situation is far from bright. Shall we hold on with the few men we have?

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Here I have to talk to local people through an interpreter to rescue them from the "services" of the soldiers. I shall say no more about the way the soldiers treat the women.

4 May. Brandenburg.

The enemy chain surrounding us is broken. The defenders of Berlin and various desperate German units flee towards the south. If they had passed through Brandenburg we could not have resisted....

The Germans have left Brandenburg....The "Banner of Victory" is flying over Berlin. We have reached the goal toward which we moved for four years, on a sea of blood, on rafts made of the bodies of Russian soldiers killed in battle. The enemy is beheaded and his head is under our feet. And for this we are praised and called the heroes who captured the German capital... We are told that we contributed to the capture of Berlin by attacking from Finsterwald to Brandenburg. We are promised the same rewards the heroes of Berlin will have.

Entirely unexpectedly came an order promoting me to the rank of guards lieutenant colonel (I forgot to say that I had become a guards officer). The commander of the infantry regiment (under whose command we have been at Brandenburg) promised to recommend me for the "Gold Medal."

All these decorations and ranks now seem to me more bitter than a medicine prescribed for a man hopelessly ill.

Night of the 6 May. Klein Weitzstein.

Weitzstein is a small village between Dresden and Leipzig. We are in a hurry to get into Czechoslovakia and to occupy its capital - Prague ahead of the others. I do not understand who are these "others," unless they are the troops of the second Ukrainian Front.....

Yesterday the chief of the personnel section of the artillery of the Front happened to come our way. This officer, so "solicitous for my welfare," told me: "You are not only restored to your previous assignment but you have been given a guards regiment. I helped you in every way I could."

Fate is certainly subjecting me to trials. First it runs me through the gauntlet, and now it is trying to be kind to me. A great internal struggle is taking place in me between a strong desire to

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carry out my plans and a weakness of will.... I feel that the day is drawing  
near when there will be a revolution in my life.

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